

Ofcom Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin

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Good Morning Britain

Type of case Broadcast Standards

Outcome Not in Breach

Service ITV

Date & time 8 March 2021, 06:00

Category Harm and Offence

Summary This programme focused on the interview between Oprah Winfrey and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. It contained statements about suicide and mental health which had the potential to be harmful and highly offensive. However, our Decision is that overall the programme contained sufficient challenge to provide adequate protection and context to its viewers. We also considered that the comments about race in the programme could have been potentially highly offensive, but that the comments were sufficiently contextualised. Therefore, our Decision is that the programme did not breach the Ofcom Broadcasting Code.

Introduction

Good Morning Britain (“GMB”) is a weekday morning news and discussion programme broadcast on ITV. The programme is compiled by ITV Broadcasting Limited on behalf of the Licensee, ITV Breakfast Broadcasting Limited (“ITV” or “the Licensee”).

Most of the broadcast on 8 March 2021 (“the Programme”) was dedicated to discussing an interview between Oprah Winfrey and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex (“the Interview”) which had been broadcast overnight in the USA. The Interview was due to air in the UK that evening and clips of it had been made publicly available ahead of the full broadcast.

Ofcom received more than 50,000 complaints about the Programme; the majority of which said that comments about mental health and suicide made by one of the lead presenters, Piers Morgan, were both harmful to the audience and highly offensive and that discussions on issues relating to race and racism in the Programme were highly offensive to some viewers. In this Decision, we address both aspects of these complaints in detail below.

This case: attracted significant publicity; ignited a public debate about freedom of expression; and generated a very high volume of complaints to Ofcom. In coming to our Decision, Ofcom assessed the Programme in full, carefully considering the right to freedom of expression and the need to adequately protect audiences from harm and offence. The Programme covered two very serious and sensitive issues, namely: mental health and suicide; and race. In Ofcom's view there is a high public interest in having an open and frank debate on both issues. At the same time, they are both issues which had potential to cause offence. We also took into account that this Programme focused on a significant news story about the Royal Family which was clearly a legitimate subject for debate in the public interest.

Ofcom's Decision in this case was finely balanced. In the particular circumstances, we considered the broadcaster provided adequate protection to viewers, from potentially harmful and highly offensive statements about mental health and suicide, as there was sufficient challenge to such statements which meant they were adequately contextualised. We also considered the statements made in the Programme about race and racism had the potential to be highly offensive to some viewers. However, in the particular circumstances of this case, they were sufficiently contextualised. Therefore, our Decision is that the Programme did not breach the Ofcom Broadcasting Code ("the Code"). We set out our reasons for reaching this Decision below.

The Content

Ofcom took into account the entire Programme broadcast on 8 March 2021 and parts of the Programme broadcast on 9 March 2021 which ITV cited in its representations to us. A summary of this content is detailed below. A transcript of all the relevant sections of the broadcast on 8 March 2021 and the broadcast on 9 March 2021 are contained in the Annex, which accompanies this Decision.

Monday 8 March 2021

As set out above, most of the Programme was dedicated to discussion and debate about the Interview. Clips of the Interview were played during the course of the morning with commentary from the presenters and correspondents. *GMB* had also invited a range of guests onto the Programme to discuss several issues raised in the Interview throughout the duration of the Programme.

Between 06:00 and 06:32, news presenter Charlotte Hawkins presented the day's news and discussed the Interview with correspondents. At 06:32, lead presenters Piers Morgan and Susanna Reid joined the Programme and began discussing some of the key elements of the Interview. For example, they discussed, among other things, the statements made by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex relating to a conversation the Duke of Sussex had with family members about the colour of their child's skin and the Duchess of Sussex's account of having suicidal thoughts.

The discussion was interspersed with clips from the Interview. ITV News' Royal Editor Chris Ship was in the *GMB* studio and discussed the key elements of the Interview with the lead presenters. There were:

contributions from Noel Philips, *GMB*'s North American correspondent, who described how the Interview was being received in the USA; and an interview with American journalist Megyn Kelly. There were also two guest panels during the Programme which predominately discussed the issues raised in the Interview around race. The first panel included the following guests: lawyer, author and women's rights activist, Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu; journalists Kevin Maguire and Andrew Pierce; and Victoria Cross recipient, Johnson Beharry. The second panel included: singer, Chaka Khan; Sunday Times Royal correspondent, Roya Nikkhah; Royal biographer, Andrew Morton; and television presenter, Trisha Goddard. The Programme also included an interview with Sarah Brown, who spoke about her role as a campaigner for global health and education and her experience of the Royal Family as the wife of former Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Tuesday 9 March 2021

The following day, Tuesday 9 March 2021, and after the Interview had been broadcast in full in the UK, *GMB* continued the conversation about the statements made in the Interview by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex and the reaction to those statements. Lead presenters Ms Reid and Mr Morgan were also joined by *GMB* weather presenter Alex Beresford and health expert Dr Hilary Jones, who provided their own views on the key elements of the Interview.

The Complaints

Mental Health and Suicide

A significant number of the complaints that Ofcom received expressed concern about Mr Morgan's comments regarding the Duchess of Sussex's revelations about her mental health and feelings of suicide. These included complainants who considered Mr Morgan was denying and dismissing the Duchess of Sussex's account of her suicidal thoughts and, in so doing, could potentially dissuade viewers experiencing suicidal thoughts of their own from seeking help, for fear of not being believed or taken seriously. Some complaints described this as a "harmful rhetoric" that "made a mockery of suicide" and could "lead to a higher chance of people taking their own lives". Complainants noted that this was at odds with ITV's recent mental health campaign¹. We also received complaints that the tone of the coverage was at times aggressive, and some of Mr Morgan's comments amounted to bullying of the Duchess of Sussex, which they found to be highly offensive.

We considered that the content raised potential issues under the following Code rules:

- Rule 2.1 "Generally accepted standards must be applied to the content of television and radio services...so as to provide adequate protection for members of the public from the inclusion in such services of harmful and/or offensive material."
- Rule 2.3 "In applying generally accepted standards broadcasters must ensure that material which may cause offence is justified by the context... Such material may include, but is not limited to... humiliation, distress, violation of human dignity, discriminatory treatment or language (for example on the grounds of...race...)...Appropriate information should

¹ ITV launched a [mental health awareness campaign in 2020 called "Britain Get Talking"](#).

also be broadcast where it would assist in avoiding or minimising offence.”

Race

We also received a significant number of complaints raising concerns that Mr Morgan: had denied and belittled the Duchess of Sussex’s personal account of her experiences of racism; and, had questioned whether asking about the colour of her unborn baby’s skin was racist, which they found highly offensive. Therefore, we also considered the discussions about race and racism under Rule 2.3.

We requested comments from the Licensee about how the content complied with these rules.

Other complaints

Ofcom also received other complaints about the Programme categorised as follows:

- the Programme incited hatred and racism;
- comments made by Mr Morgan were not duly impartial;
- Ms Reid did not do enough to challenge Mr Morgan’s views;
- Mr Morgan was only giving his opinion, which is a right under freedom of expression;
- the content misrepresented facts by selectively showing newspaper front pages;
- Mr Morgan mocked the American accent, which is offensive;
- the combative tone of the Programme was not suitably scheduled for child viewers;
- comments from guest Ms Goddard were offensive;
- guest Ms Kelly’s views were racist and offensive; and,
- comments made by Dr Mos-Shogbamimu were offensive.

We carefully assessed all of these complaints against the rules set out in the Code and found that they did not raise issues warranting investigation.

Ofcom also received 802 messages that expressed support for Mr Morgan and objected to his “removal” from *Good Morning Britain*². As these complaints relate to a contractual issue between a broadcaster and its presenter, they fall outside Ofcom’s regulatory remit.

Response

ITV said that *GMB* is “well known for its lively and robust discussion” of the day’s news stories and viewers are “familiar with the combative dynamic” between the lead presenters, Ms Reid and Mr Morgan, who had presented *GMB* together for the last five years. The Licensee added that on 8 March 2021, the Programme followed the “highly anticipated” interview between the Duke and Duchess of Sussex and Ms Winfrey, which was the main item of news that morning in the UK and therefore “subject to widespread analysis”. It said that prior to the interview being broadcast, “opinions were divided in the UK” on whether the interview should have been given at all, and its contents were “anticipated to be controversial and likely to provoke debate”.

ITV said that the Programme began with the day’s news headlines, presented by Ms Hawkins, with the focus on the interview. This included a report on how the US was reacting to the interview and mainly “focused on two of the most shocking parts of the interview – that the Duchess had contemplated

² ITV told Ofcom Mr Morgan resigned from *Good Morning Britain* on 9 March 2021.

suicide, and that a member of the Royal family had raised concerns about how dark the skin colour of her baby might be". At 06:32, the lead presenters Ms Reid and Mr Morgan were joined live by Mr Ship, ITV News Royal Editor, to discuss the interview. The Licensee described the discussion as "emotive", featuring Mr Morgan's "strong views... express[ed] forcefully", which are well known and expected by viewers. It added that viewers are aware of Mr Morgan's "negative views about the Duchess of Sussex" and strong support for "the Royal family in their dealings with the Duke and Duchess".

ITV acknowledged that it was important, "from an editorial perspective", to include alternative, robust views within the Programme to "counterbalance" Mr Morgan's views. To achieve this, the Licensee said that "a range of contributors were booked to appear on the Programme, a number of whom were known to disagree with Mr Morgan about the Duchess of Sussex and who were able to speak equally forcefully".

ITV described the contributors as follows:

- Chris Ship – ITV News Royal Editor, who could provide analysis and context and an understanding of how the Royal Family might react.
- Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu – lawyer, political and women's rights activist, who was strongly supportive of the Duchess of Sussex.
- Trisha Goddard – broadcaster who has spoken widely about the racism she has experienced, including racism from the British press.
- Chaka Khan – high profile American celebrity who has lived in the US and the UK and who has first-hand knowledge of the media spotlight, racism and sexism.
- Sarah Brown – campaigner for global health and education who, as the wife of a former prime minister, had experience of being in the public eye and had met members of the Royal Family.
- Megyn Kelly – a well-known US media commentator and journalist, who could give a sense of the US reaction to the interview and could reflect that reaction in the US was not universally supportive of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex.
- Andrew Pierce and Kevin Maguire – regular newspaper/political commentators on *GMB* who could reflect on the UK press reaction to the interview. Andrew Pierce is pro-monarchy, while Kevin Maguire is known to hold republican views.
- Johnson Beharry VC – friend of the Duke of Sussex who had personal experience of meeting the Royal Family and could say that he had never found them to be racist.
- Andrew Morton – journalist and Royal biographer, known to be sceptical about whether the Royal household's senior staff are capable of adopting a modern outlook.
- Roya Nikkhah – Royal correspondent with the Sunday Times who has interviewed Princes William and Harry and has a good knowledge of the younger generation of royals.

The Licensee provided a transcript of several parts of the Programme, including verbatim quotes from the various contributors which they considered provided challenge to the "controversial or strong opinions" put forward by Mr Morgan. For brevity, Ofcom has not included all the quotations which ITV provided but these are contained in the transcript, which is available in the Annex to this Decision.

The Licensee said, "Ofcom has previously accepted that regular *GMB* viewers have come to expect Piers Morgan to have strongly held views on a variety of issues, which he often expresses uncompromisingly, and for those views to be routinely challenged by his co-presenter Susanna Reid

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and sometimes by other co-presenters and programme guests". It added that, in this Programme, ITV had accepted that some of the comments from Mr Morgan had the potential to cause offence to viewers. On recognising this, the Licensee said it "took steps" to mitigate any potential offence by including a clarification from Mr Morgan in the following day's programme on 9 March 2021 in order "to make it clear that it was very important that anyone experiencing suicidal thoughts should seek help"³. ITV added that, in the 9 March 2021 programme, Mr Morgan clarified his views on the importance of anyone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts seeking help, and this was reiterated by Ms Reid and Dr Jones.

The Licensee added that *GMB's* weather presenter, Mr Beresford, "who has previously spoken on the programme about issues relating to race", was included in the discussion on the programme on 9 March 2021 to "challenge Piers Morgan directly about what he had said about not believing the Duchess of Sussex's claims, and to explain how important perspective is when considering allegations of racism". This discussion "became heated" and Mr Morgan "walked off set", returning fifteen minutes later to continue the conversation. During the discussion, ITV said that Mr Beresford explained "he did not believe Piers Morgan was racist, but there had clearly been a concern by the Duchess of Sussex about the way the question about the colour of her child's skin was asked". Mr Beresford then "accepted" that a question could be asked in a way that doesn't cause offence, but the Duke and Duchess of Sussex have expressed concern that what was said was done so in a negative way in the interview. The Licensee added that "Piers Morgan agreed that if the conversation expressed a worry or a concern, it would be racist, but he maintained that he did not believe the Duchess's claims" and "later that day, Piers Morgan resigned from *GMB* and his resignation was accepted by ITV".

ITV said that it accepted that Mr Morgan had given strong views on 8 March 2021, but these were challenged by the co-presenter and other contributors "clearly and robustly" in a way which added context to the comments and offered alternative viewpoints. The Licensee said it believed these challenges mitigated the potential offence caused and ensured viewers were adequately protected from harm and offence. Therefore, it believed that the discussions had not exceeded generally accepted standards, given *GMB's* unique discussion and reporting style has established viewer expectations. Finally, ITV said that the clarification broadcast on 9 March 2021 helped to further mitigate potential offence and therefore, it believed that Rules 2.1 and 2.3 of the Code were complied with.

Representations on Ofcom's Preliminary View

Ofcom provided the Licensee with a copy of our Preliminary View that this Programme was not in breach of the Code, and we asked them to respond, confirming they had taken into account any representations from the presenter, Piers Morgan. ITV told us it did not wish to make any representations itself, but, Mr Morgan wished to comment on certain aspects.

In his representations, Mr Morgan focused specifically on Ofcom's discussion of aspects of the Preliminary View relating to comments he had made in the Programme on the Duchess of Sussex's account of racism she had experienced. Mr Morgan noted that views that "had the potential to be offensive also had the potential not to be" and it would not be right for Ofcom to "shut down"

³ See Annex to this Decision for the verbatim clarification on 9 March 2021.

alternative points of view. He added it was “perfectly reasonable” for a journalist to ask a question regarding discussions in bi-racial families about the skin colour of an unborn child in an appropriate context. We took Mr Morgan’s representations into account in reaching our Decision.

Decision

Under the Communications Act 2003, Ofcom has a duty to secure the application of standards, in the case of all television services, that provide adequate protection to members of the public from the inclusion of offensive and harmful material. In carrying out its duties, Ofcom is required to have regard to the need to secure the application of these standards in the manner that best guarantees an appropriate level of freedom of expression. Section Two of the Code contains rules that broadcasters must comply with to provide adequate protection for members of the public from the inclusion of offensive and harmful material.

Further, Ofcom’s Code is drafted and applied in accordance with Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights (“ECHR”). This provides for the broadcaster’s and audience’s right to freedom of expression, which encompasses the right to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without unnecessary interference by public authority. The right to freedom of expression is not absolute. Ofcom must exercise its duties in light of the broadcaster’s and audience’s Article 10 rights and not restrict that right unless it is satisfied that it is necessary and proportionate to do so. This means that each and every time Ofcom applies the Code to broadcast content, we give careful consideration to the broadcaster’s and the audience’s Article 10 rights.

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, Ofcom must also have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic, such as mental disability or race, and those who do not.

In this case, we considered that the Interview between Ms Winfrey and the Duke and Duchess of Sussex was a highly anticipated moment of national and international interest and discussion. It was a major news story, dominating headlines in both broadcast and print media in the UK. It was therefore likely to have been within audience expectations that the revelations in the Interview would be discussed during the Programme. We also considered that given the seriousness of the issues and allegations raised in the Interview, it was legitimate for those to be discussed and questioned throughout the Programme, in line with the broadcaster’s and audience’s right to freedom of expression.

Mental Health and Suicide

Ofcom’s approach to Harm and Offence

In line with the right to freedom of expression, the Code enables broadcasters to discuss challenging and contentious subjects and include potentially harmful or offensive viewpoints in programmes as part of legitimate debate in the public interest. However, in doing so, they must ensure that they provide adequate protection for the audience from the inclusion of potentially harmful/offensive content, and that potentially offensive material is justified by the context. It is for the broadcaster to decide how to secure such protections and provide context where necessary.

Ofcom's [Guidance to Section Two of the Code](#) explains that when Ofcom considers content against Rules 2.1 and 2.3 of the Code, it does so with a consideration of generally accepted standards. The Guidance also explains that generally accepted standards will change over time and will also vary according to the specific context.

When considering a programme's compliance with Rule 2.1, Ofcom must assess the nature of the content and whether there is a reasonable likelihood of it causing members of the public actual or potential harm. Context is important and the extent of any protection required will depend on all the relevant circumstances, including the service on which the material is broadcast, the degree of harm likely to be caused and the likely expectation of the audience.

Rule 2.3 requires broadcasters to ensure that the broadcast of potentially offensive material is justified by the context. Context includes, for example, the degree of offence likely to be caused, the service on which the programme is broadcast, its editorial content and the likely expectations of the audience.

In reaching this Decision, we first considered whether there was potential for harm and offence in the statements made during the Programme. We then went on to consider whether ITV had provided adequate protection for the audience from the potential harm, and whether the potential offence was justified by the context.

Freedom of Expression

As explained above, in applying the Code, Ofcom takes account of the broadcaster's right to freedom of expression and the audience's right to receive information and ideas without undue interference, under Article 10 of the ECHR.

Broadcasters are free to discuss challenging and difficult subjects in their programming and the Code does not prohibit any subject matters from being covered. Similarly, the Code allows for a range of opinions and views to be expressed, including those which may be controversial, in line with freedom of expression.

We took into account the topic under discussion in the Programme. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex had given a lengthy prime time interview in which they made a number of serious allegations about their treatment within the Royal household. This interview became a major international news story and we acknowledged it was both legitimate and in the public interest for ITV to broadcast debates featuring presenters such as Mr Morgan scrutinising those allegations including the veracity, timing, and possible motivations of the claims. Consistent with the right to freedom of expression, broadcasters can portray strong views on the matter, including views casting doubt on the claims made.

Discussion of mental health and suicide in the Programme

Ofcom carefully assessed the Programme, which focused on the Interview between the Duke of Sussex and the Duchess of Sussex ("DS", used below in reference to the Duchess of Sussex only) and Ms Winfrey ("OW"). We noted that the Programme focused on a discussion relating to the claims made in the Interview of alleged racism directed towards the Duchess of Sussex (discussed further below). However, we acknowledged that throughout the Programme, Mr Morgan made numerous remarks

which appeared to disbelieve the Duchess of Sussex’s testimony regarding her suicidal thoughts and portray her as someone who should not be trusted or taken seriously.

In assessing the Programme, we considered whether the sections of the Programme where the Duchess of Sussex’s comments about mental health and suicidal thoughts were discussed had the potential to cause harm and offence. We then considered whether there was adequate challenge in relation to each segment before considering whether the comments as a whole were sufficiently contextualised.

In assessing whether the comments made by Mr Morgan had the potential for harm and offence, we took into account the following context.

Ofcom is aware that suicide is a major public health concern in the UK. Publicly available information from leading mental health charities states that in the UK a person takes their own life every 90 minutes, resulting in around 6,500 deaths every year⁴. In September 2020, it was reported that the latest data showed that suicides among men in England and Wales was at the highest rate observed since 2000⁵. In the UK, suicide rates among young people have been increasing since 2018 and the suicide rate for young females is now at its highest rate on record⁶. More young people, aged between 16 and 24, die of suicide than any other cause in the UK⁷. Ofcom is therefore clear that suicide is a continuing and serious public health issue. Ofcom understands that there is a range of evidence and advice which states that anyone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts and expresses those feelings to someone else should always be taken seriously⁸. Guidance explains that severe mental health disorders and suicidal thoughts are often associated with stigma and shame, and this can prevent people from talking about their feelings or seeking the help and support that they need⁹.

Ofcom also noted that mental health charity Mind released a statement¹⁰ on 8 March 2021 in relation to the Interview. Mind’s Chief Executive said that:

“Sharing personal experiences of poor mental health can be overwhelming, so it’s important that when people do open up about their mental health they are met with understanding and support” and its “research found that 25 per cent of people said hearing a celebrity talk openly about their own mental health had inspired them to seek help or get support”.

⁴ [Suicide statistics report](#), Samaritans, December 2019.

⁵ [Suicides in England and Wales 2019](#), Office for National Statistics, September 2020.

⁶ See footnote 4.

⁷ See footnote 4.

⁸ [Supporting someone who feels suicidal](#), Mind; [Myths about suicide](#), Samaritans.

⁹ [Suicide](#), Mental Health Foundation; [Why we should talk about suicide safely](#), Papyrus.

¹⁰ [Mind responds to the Duchess of Sussex, Meghan Markle's interview](#).

The statement also said that:

“feelings of shame and isolation mean people affected by mental health problems go without the help and support they need...we all still have a role to play to reduce mental health stigma and discrimination”.

We considered the following exchange at the start of the Programme between the regular presenters Mr Morgan (“PM”) and Ms Reid (“SR”), and Chris Ship (“CS”), ITV’s Royal Editor:

PM: *“And you know what, we’re going to bring in Chris Ship here. Chris, I, I’ve got to say, I watched this interview: a, with my jaw drop dropping like everybody else; but, b. with mounting anger. Mainly because I could see the way it is already playing in America and around the world. This is a caricature portrait of our monarchy and Royal Family which I think is contemptible, I’ve got to be honest with you”.*

SR: *“OK, can I, you’ve said that you wanted your say and we’ve let you have your say. Can I just have my say as well on this? They have dropped bombshells, no doubt about it. They have described what they said was an almost unsurvivable experience. They have both said that they felt controlled within the Royal Family, that they felt trapped, that they felt at risk, that their security was removed. Race, obviously, they claim, played a part in that and they made very serious accusations, as Piers says. Um, but Meghan has within this interview said it got so bad that she was suicidal. And I think a lot of people will feel extremely concerned about that. Let’s just have a listen to that”.*

A clip from the Interview was played:

DS: *“And I, I just didn’t, I just didn’t want to be alive anymore”.*

OW: *“So, were you thinking of harming yourself? Were you having suicidal thoughts?”*

DS: *“Yes, this was very, very clear”.*

OW: *“Wow”.*

DS: *“I went to the institution and I said that I needed to go somewhere to get help. I said that I’d never felt this way before and I need to go somewhere. And I was told that I couldn’t, that it wouldn’t be good for the institution”.*

The presenters then continued to discuss the Interview with Royal Editor, Mr Ship:

PM: *“OK, again, let’s have the names. Who did you go to? What did they say to you? I’m sorry, I don’t believe a word she says, Meghan Markle. I wouldn’t believe it if she read me a weather report”.*

- SR: *“Well that’s a pretty unsympathetic reaction to someone who has expressed those thoughts”.*
- PM: *“And the fact that she’s fired up this, this onslaught against our Royal Family I think is contemptible. Chris, you’re the impartial Royal Editor”.*
- SR: *“It’s a shame you’re not sitting between us, frankly”.*
- CS: *“I think I should, do you want to swap now? Listen, when I, when I put my keyboard down, as it were, at three o’clock this morning after I stopped watching it live, I was kind of paralysed in my seat for a little bit. There was a lot to take in. I mean, that’s an understatement, isn’t it? I mean, someone saying that they had suicidal thoughts, I don’t think you can say that she was lying at that point. She had these thoughts, pretty serious ones. She took them to HR. Now look, we talked last week about Buckingham Palace’s HR department. What did they do about the victims when this bullying complaint against Meghan was put in? I don’t think Buckingham Palace’s HR department comes out very well at all”.*
- PM: *“Her camp refused, well, hang on, on that point Chris, her camp immediately said: ‘They can’t be believed. Those victims can’t be believed’. And yet we’re supposed to believe everything Meghan Markle now says about her own terrible ordeal of bullying and racism and all the rest of it? You can’t have it both ways. We’re not allowed to believe the apparent victims of her own bullying, but we have to believe everything she says”.*
- SR: *“Well, let’s take all of these claims and accusations seriously”.*
- CS: *“Yes, let’s do one by one”.*
- SR: *“There is this claim that she felt suicidal, and I just don’t think you can brush over that and say, and not take it seriously”.*
- CS: *“Agreed, yep”.*
- SR: *“For whatever reason, she was very, she felt very vulnerable, and it seems that when she asked for help, it was, the response was ‘We can’t do that because that wouldn’t look good’”.*
- CS: *“Well, not only that it wouldn’t look good but they said to her, according to Meghan, that: ‘We can’t help you with your suicidal thoughts. We can see that you’re suffering but the reason that we can’t help you is that you’re not a paid member of the Royal Family’. In other words: ‘If you were a footman or someone in the kitchens, we could do something about it. Because you’re a member of the family, you’re the wife of Prince Harry, we couldn’t’. Which I thought was quite extraordinary. Why don’t those systems exist? Because, you know, Royal Family*

members are only human and if she's reached that level of stress that she's thinking about taking her own life, where are the systems to look after them? What's in place? And basically, she said there was nothing at all".

This was the Programme's opening discussion about the Duchess of Sussex's mental health and her testimony that she had had suicidal thoughts. In the Interview clip, which was played during this discussion, the Duchess of Sussex said to Ms Winfrey *"I just didn't want to be alive anymore"*, that these suicidal thoughts were *"very, very clear"* and *"I needed to go somewhere to get help"*. The Duchess of Sussex added that she had approached the Royal household for support but was unable to access the help she needed. In response to this clip, Mr Morgan said that he did not believe the Duchess of Sussex and considered her testimony about her experience of a mental health crisis to lack credibility: *"I don't believe a word she says, Meghan Markle. I wouldn't believe it if she read me the weather report"*.

Throughout this exchange Mr Morgan appeared to disbelieve what the Duchess of Sussex had said about her own suicidal thoughts. Taking this into account and the context set out above regarding mental health and suicide, we considered the statements made by Mr Morgan during the above exchange had the potential to cause harm to viewers. We were concerned that, without adequate protections from the broadcaster, audience members may have been discouraged from seeking help about their mental health, particularly those experiencing suicidal thoughts, for a fear of being met with a similar reaction. Given the clear sensitivities surrounding the topic of suicide and mental health, in our view, these comments also had the potential to cause offence to viewers.

However, we took into account that Ms Reid and Mr Ship did challenge Mr Morgan's comments and we consider below whether or not these challenges contextualised the potentially harmful and highly offensive comments. In particular, Ms Reid said remarks made by the Duchess of Sussex about her suicidal thoughts showed she *"felt very vulnerable"* adding the comments could not be *"brushed over"* and *"let's take all of these claims and accusations seriously"*, whilst suggesting Mr Morgan was being *"unsympathetic"* to someone expressing such thoughts. Mr Ship agreed with Ms Reid that he found the statements made about the Duchess of Sussex's mental health to be *"serious ones"*, adding in direct response to Mr Morgan's disbelief of her testimony: *"I don't think you can say she was lying at that point"*. Mr Ship also expressed concern that the Duchess of Sussex said she was not offered professional support by the Palace's Human Resources department because it didn't *"look good"* for the institution, as *"Royal Family members are only human"* and *"if she's reached that level of stress that she's thinking about taking her own life, where are the systems to look after them"*.

Later in the Programme, there was the following exchange between the presenters about the Interview:

PM: *"They [the Duke and Duchess of Sussex] don't know how to spell the word compassion. They've trashed his Dad. They've trashed his brother. They've trashed his sister-in-law. They've trashed everything the Queen has worked so hard to maintain with the monarchy. And we've supposed to believe they're compassionate? Do me a favour"*.

SR: *“They felt they were trashed. They felt they were lied about. She said that she was driven to the verge of taking her own life”.*

PM: *“She says that, yeah”.*

SR: *“They’ve had absolutely obviously awful experiences”.*

PM: *“And members of her female staff at the Palace said they were bullied by Meghan. And when those allegations were made, her team came back and said it was outrageous, dismissed it, didn’t take them seriously at all, but we’re supposed to take everything she says as absolute gospel, no?”*

SR: *“No, we have to take it all seriously”.*

PM: *“And we’re supposed to give that respect. She showed no respect for the alleged bullying victims that she apparently traumatised, and I’ve had one account on one of them. I can tell you, if they start talking, we’re going to hear a very different story about the Duke and Duchess of Compassion”.*

SR: *“Yeah, is it not...”.*

PM: *“But we’re not allowed to hear their stories because they’ve been dismissed out of hand”.*

SR: *“No”.*

PM: *“By Meghan and Harry”.*

SR: *“We have reported on those allegations...”.*

PM: *“Those bully victims, their stories don’t count. Only their truth counts. It is honestly...”.*

SR: *“We have reported on those allegations. We take them very seriously and there is an investigation now launching into them”.*

In the above exchange, Ms Reid said the couple *“felt they were trashed. They felt they were lied about”* and had *“absolutely obviously awful experiences”*. Ms Reid also repeated the Duchess of Sussex’s statement about her being on the *“verge of taking her own life”*. We noted Mr Morgan’s direct response to this comment was *“She says that, yeah”*. In our view, this comment had the potential to be interpreted by viewers as Mr Morgan disbelieving the Duchess of Sussex’s account of her suicidal thoughts. Mr Morgan then sought to bring the discussion back to the claims made against the Duchess of Sussex regarding her alleged misconduct with her employees, which he said had been *“dismissed”* and not *“taken seriously at all”*.

Ofcom acknowledges that there is a clear public interest in programmes discussing mental health issues, including through reference to public figures who have spoken publicly about their own experiences. Such discussions can have an important role in de-stigmatising the issue and enabling *Issue 433 of Ofcom’s Broadcast and On Demand Bulletin*
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viewers to discuss mental health, whether as an individual who has experienced poor mental health or as someone supporting another person in such circumstances. However, we also considered that broadcasters need to take particular care over how the subject is presented to audiences, in part to mitigate any potential risk that programmes may convey a message that sharing experiences of poor mental health could be met with disbelief, derision, or a lack of sympathy.

Given this context and the significant harm associated with the treatment of suicidal thoughts, we would expect broadcasters to be alive to the sensitivities and potential for harm such conversations can give rise to, and to take appropriate measures, if necessary, to ensure the audience is adequately protected. In our view, Mr Morgan's disbelief of the Duchess of Sussex's account of her suicidal thoughts in this exchange had the potential to cause harm and offence to viewers.

However, Ms Reid provided challenge to Mr Morgan's position, stating "*we have to take it all seriously*" and "*We have reported on these allegations. We take them very seriously and there is an investigation now launching into them*". We will consider further below whether this, along with other contextual factors provided sufficient justification for including the potentially harmful and highly offensive comments.

The discussion on mental health continued later in the Programme with US based commentator and journalist Megyn Kelly (MK):

- SR: *"There's also going to be a lot of sympathy for the Duchess of Sussex. You may not feel it".*
- PM: *"You feel it, really, after that?"*
- SR: *"Well, she says..."*
- PM: *"Do you? Serious question. Do you feel genuine sympathy with Meghan Markle and Prince Harry after watching that load of bilge?"*
- SR: *"Anyone who says that they were left feeling suicidal..."*
- PM: *"OK".*
- SR: *"...didn't want to be alive anymore, you have to feel sympathy for them. Um, let's talk to Megyn Kelly. She hosts the Megyn Kelly Show podcast. And, Megyn, you came over to cover Harry and Meghan's Royal wedding for NBC's morning show Today. And that was a time when there was universal, I'd say, love and admiration for the couple. But they say it all went downhill from there and, you know, she has made some pretty explosive accusations and allegations, not just about the Royal Family but about the impact that it had on them. Will she, will they, get sympathy or criticism over in the States, which loves the Royal Family? What do they feel about the couple?"*
- MK: *"I think over here it's breaking down by party. The more conservative-leaning people are against them and the more liberal people are for*

them and against the monarchy. So, it's sort of the same today as it was yesterday. But I'll tell you, just watching it myself, and I was one of the people on the streets rooting for them, delighted that this was happening, right. It was exciting. She was an American, she's a person of colour, it looked like the modernisation of the British monarchy. The British people adored her. I saw them, I interviewed them. But what I saw tonight was somebody who was totally un-self-aware. I mean, completely unaware of how she sounded. Right, like: 'I wasn't planning on saying anything shocking, except for my husband's racist family almost drove me to suicidal thoughts while I was pregnant with my baby. And by the way, I had no idea what the internet said about Harry'. Nobody believes that. 'And I thought meeting the Queen was going to be just like meeting a celebrity in Los Angeles, like meeting a Kris Jenner'. Right, like, nobody believes that. And she goes on to say like: 'I'm not, I don't believe in any of the grandeur', you know. There's an article already up in the New York Post here in the States saying: 'This is the person who had Clooney and Oprah at her wedding even though she didn't even know them, and then covered herself in blood diamonds from the Saudi Prince'. So, like, spare us that you're not into any of the grandeur. And then, while she's spinning this tale about how tough she had it in the castle, how lonely she was in the castle, um, she's, she's painting herself in, sort of, these adorations, like: 'I'm, it was incredibly courageous of me to come forward about my depression and I just love saving things'. And it was, like, it was just peppered with these compliments of herself while she was making these complaints that will be totally unrelatable to 99% of the people out there".

PM: *"Yeah, you know what Meg, I couldn't have put that better myself, so. But mainly because it's the level of disingenuousness. And Harry also, you know. To a point, I expected all this from Meghan Markle, I could almost have scripted what she was going to do. Mental health, race, all the hot button things were going to be played against the Royal Family. There'd be no names, they wouldn't name people on that. They'd just leave it hanging so we can look at all the Royal Family and the whole Palace staff as a bunch of callous racists. And that's exactly what she did, and I expected all that, and I expected all the layers of hypocrisy. Prince Harry is the one that I'm staggered by. As his grandfather lies in hospital, aged 99, entering his third or fourth week now. Clearly been very seriously ill, had a heart procedure a few days ago. The Queen must be worried sick about her husband. And the Queen and Prince Philip have worked so hard for seven decades now to preserve the monarchy. And in two hours, Prince Harry has allowed his wife to trash everything they stand for. I just don't get what he's thinking".*

MK: *“That’s why I don’t think you can say it’s about race, because if it was about race they would have been brutal to her from the start. And they were over the top in love with her and then her behaviour changed and their coverage changed. But look, this isn’t all the fault of the Royal Family. She became a Royal. She married a Prince. The press is going to cover you. I mean, even in my much lower station in life as a news anchor, the press is brutal. You get punched in the face rhetorically all the time and it’s awful and it’s a fact of life you have to learn to deal with. It doesn’t, it shouldn’t drive you to that kind of depression, those kinds of self-lamentations. And the fact that she became suicidal over the fact that the press was nasty, she was stuck in a castle and there might have been a racist in the Royal Family is truly shocking. It’s truly shocking”.*

PM: *“We don’t know any names”.*

SR: *“Well, it’s upsetting”.*

PM: *“She says she went to the Palace about her mental health and got rejected. Who was that person at the Palace that rejected her and what was her husband doing about all this? She says, Harry says there was a racist in the family spewing racist stuff about his baby. Who was that racist? You can’t just spray gun people anonymously and then smear them all. Megyn, you’ve been brilliant as always. Thank you for your contribution. Always good to have you on the programme. Thank you very much”.*

In Ofcom’s view, Ms Kelly’s comments implied that responding to negative press coverage by becoming depressed or suicidal either does not happen (i.e. the account should be disbelieved) or, if it does, then the inability to cope with negative events demonstrates a blameworthy lack of resilience and an unwillingness to accept the negative aspects that accompany public life. We noted Mr Morgan generally agreed with Ms Kelly’s comments (*“I couldn’t have put that better myself”*) and appeared to further imply the Duchess of Sussex was deliberately using her testimony regarding her mental health to cause damage to the British monarchy. Mr Morgan suggested he could *“almost have scripted what she was going to do. Mental health, race, all the hot button things were going to be played against the Royal Family”*, adding he *“expected all this”* from the Duchess of Sussex. In our view, through these statements Mr Morgan implied he considered the testimony presented by the Duchess of Sussex about her mental health formed part of a broader agenda to discredit or cause embarrassment to the Royal Family.

Ofcom is aware of evidence from leading mental health charities¹¹ which suggests that feelings of shame mean people affected by mental health problems are hindered from accessing the support they need, and in situations where individuals are suicidal, this help may be required urgently. We considered the statements made by Ms Kelly, alongside those of Mr Morgan, further suggested that

¹¹ See footnote 9.

privileged people cannot or should not suffer from poor mental health, and it is a sign of weakness or shameful to speak about such feelings publicly. We therefore considered this had the potential to cause harm and offence to audiences.

However, we took into account that Ms Reid placed these statements into context by offering an alternative point of view and challenging Mr Morgan prior to introducing Ms Kelly and subsequently challenging Mr Morgan and Ms Kelly over the course of the interview with Ms Kelly. Ms Reid consistently offered an alternative point of view which appeared to believe and sympathise with the Duchess of Sussex's testimony:

"There's also going to be a lot of sympathy for the Duchess of Sussex. You may not feel it";

"Anyone who says that they were left feeling suicidal.. didn't want to be alive anymore, you have to feel sympathy for them"; and

"Well, it's upsetting".

As part of a panel discussion later in the Programme, Mr Morgan again questioned the Duchess of Sussex's motives for giving an interview and said in his view she was *"somebody who's a ruthless social climber and is now destroying or trying to destroy the image of the monarchy in this country"*. He also directly categorised the Duchess of Sussex's testimony as *"shameful"*. In positioning these statements by *"calling this out for what I see it as"*, Mr Morgan, a highly experienced presenter, aimed to give authority and journalistic credibility to his views. We acknowledge Ms Reid again added context to his views of the Duchess of Sussex's account by stating that *"they have never said they want 100% privacy"* and *"I think it's desperately, desperately sad"*.

Ofcom went on to consider whether the Licensee had provided adequate protection to viewers from the potentially harmful comments about suicide and mental health made in the Programme, and whether the potential offence was justified by the context.

Adequate protection from harm and offence

It is an editorial decision for a broadcaster as to how adequate protection of viewers from both harm and offence might be achieved. Our [published guidance](#) states that there are various methods broadcasters can consider, such as rebutting harmful or offensive claims, providing audiences with relevant information, signposting to services and/or including warnings.

Audience expectations

Ofcom took into account audiences' likely expectations for *GMB* on the morning of 8 March 2021. *GMB* is a prime-time national morning news programme on a public service channel and Ofcom acknowledged that regular viewers would have been familiar with its panel format during which the day's news is discussed. Given the high-profile nature of the Interview and the newsworthy and serious allegations made within it, Ofcom considered viewers would have expected *GMB* to discuss and examine the Interview. *GMB* was one of the first opportunities that most of the British public had

had to see coverage of substantive clips from the Interview and the press and public reaction to it, including the claims about the Duchess of Sussex's contemplation of suicide. We also took into account that this was a live and largely reactive discussion of a major news story.

Regular *GMB* viewers had come to expect Mr Morgan to hold strong and sometimes divisive views, which he often expresses uncompromisingly. For example, during the course of the Coronavirus pandemic, Mr Morgan and the other *GMB* presenters conducted numerous interviews with Government ministers on the UK's approach to the pandemic which were combative in nature, and in line with audience expectations.

We also acknowledged that, as suggested by the Licensee, many viewers were likely to be aware of Mr Morgan's "negative views about the Duchess of Sussex" and strong support for "the Royal Family in their dealings with the Duke and Duchess". Therefore, we considered viewers would have expected robust discussion of the allegations made in the Interview and a variety of strongly held opinions to be aired.

It was reported that the 8 March 2021 *GMB* Programme had 1.9 million viewers¹². As such, we considered that many viewers tuned into the Programme knowing that Mr Morgan and other contributors would be vigorously debating the Interview. However, we also considered that Mr Morgan was a respected figure of authority on *GMB* with a significant following and viewers were likely to place weight on his opinions throughout the Programme. In addition, while audience expectation is a significant consideration in relation to offence, it has less impact on mitigating potential harm.

Clarification and editorial techniques

When considering whether adequate protection was provided to viewers from the potential harm in the comments made by Mr Morgan disbelieving the Duchess of Sussex's account of her suicidal thoughts, we also took into account the clarification that was broadcast in the 9 March 2021 episode of *GMB*, during which Mr Morgan said:

"Now, when we talked about this yesterday, I said, as an all-encompassing thing: 'I don't believe what Meghan Markle is saying generally in this interview', and I still have serious concerns about the veracity of a lot of what she said. But let me just state for the record about my position on mental illness, right? And on suicide. On mental illness and suicide, these are clearly extremely serious things. They should be taken extremely seriously. And if somebody is feeling that way, they should get the treatment and the help that they need every time. And if they belong to an institution like the Royal Family and they go and seek that help, they should absolutely be given it. And if it turns out Meghan Markle, and I'm not, it's not for me to question whether she felt suicidal. I wasn't in her mind, and that's for her to say. If she, my real concern was a disbelief, frankly, and I'm prepared to be proven wrong on this and, if I'm wrong, it is a scandal, that she went to a senior member of the Royal Household, told them she was suicidal and was

¹² See [Daily Mail article](#) and [Mirror article](#).

told she could not have any help because it would be a bad look for the family”.

We considered this clarification the following day was both clear and helpful, and acknowledged it was reinforced by Ms Reid and Dr Hilary Jones. We took account of the Licensee’s representations that Dr Jones reiterated *“the importance of anyone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts seeking help”* in the programme broadcast on 9 March 2021. We also acknowledged that Dr Jones is a medical professional and regular presenter on *GMB* whose advice was likely to be given weight by viewers.

However we also noted the clarification came the following day and not in the Programme itself and therefore we considered it had a lesser effect in mitigating the potential for harm.

Significant challenge

Several claims and allegations were made by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex in the Interview, which many viewers were likely to have found shocking, and Ofcom acknowledges that the majority of the *GMB* coverage on 8 March 2021 was focused on the allegations relating to alleged racism directed towards the Duchess of Sussex. As such, mental health and suicide featured in the Programme less frequently. However, although the allegations around mental health did not appear to be the primary focus of the Programme, in Ofcom’s view, a level of protection commensurate with the potential for harm and offence we have outlined above was required.

Ofcom’s [research](#) shows that audiences think that challenge to potentially harmful claims is important and can help to mitigate harm to viewers. We therefore carefully considered the examples of challenge that were provided throughout the Programme. We noted that although there were no medical, charity or other suitable representatives who could have spoken as experts on the subject of mental health and suicide in the Programme, as outlined in detail above, there was consistent challenge provided by Ms Reid and Mr Ship.

Having carefully weighed the factors outlined above, we considered that, overall, adequate context and challenge was provided by other contributors throughout the Programme to Mr Morgan’s views about the Duchess of Sussex’s comments, including the points he raised about her mental health and suicidal thoughts. We were particularly mindful of the challenge provided by Mr Ship and Ms Reid as detailed above, who explained that the Duchess of Sussex’s claims about suicide must be taken seriously and treated with concern and sympathy. We also took into account that Mr Maguire provided a robust alternative viewpoint in relation to the Duchess of Sussex’s testimony on her mental health:

SR: *“OK, Kevin, there is an alternative perspective here, which is that Meghan and Harry have got out and they have blown the lid on an institution that is stifling, controlling, has elements of racism in it, lies to protect certain people and not to protect other people, has a contract of fear with the press, which means that the Royal Family will not step in when there is unpleasant coverage. I mean, you know, there is a split here between how people are reacting to this interview. You either think it’s a disgusting slur on the Royal Family or you think that the Royal Family and the press have questions, serious questions to answer”.*

KM: *“Yeah, Susanna, it’s very polarizing, undoubtedly. And many people had a view, were going to look at this interview with preconceived positions, me included. You watch it and I think it’s worse than I thought it would be for Buckingham Palace, they must realise that now. This is worse than they were braced for. And yeah, there are questions for us in the media too, I don’t deny that. And, look, Meghan Markle could both be a very ruthless social climber and incredibly pushy and a victim of race and racism... The two are not mutually exclusive. Both could happen, but she’s clearly had an absolutely terrible, terrible time. And if, as she says, she’s having suicidal thoughts, she’s struggling with her mental health and she is denied help because it might look bad, what does that say about this, this, this family which looks cold and aloof and very uncaring? And Prince Charles not taking his son’s calls at one time? Come on, any parent...”*

We noted that in the above exchange Ms Reid gave a clear summary of a perspective on the Interview which countered that of Mr Morgan. In response, Mr Maguire gave credibility to the Duchess of Sussex’s account, expressed concern for the Duchess of Sussex’s mental wellbeing and said that she’d clearly had a *“terrible time”*. He also acknowledged the Interview raised uncomfortable questions for both Buckingham Palace and the media refocusing the debate on the allegations made by the Duchess of Sussex:

“And if, as she says, she’s having suicidal thoughts, she’s struggling with her mental health and she is denied help because it might look bad, what does that say about this, this, this family which looks cold and aloof and very uncaring?”

We considered this exchange was helpful in presenting an alternative view of the Interview to the audience, which made a clear statement that the Duchess of Sussex, as a person struggling with their mental health, should have been listened to and supported.

Conclusion

The Interview between the Duke and Duchess of Sussex and Oprah Winfrey contained serious allegations and it was legitimate for this Programme to discuss and scrutinise those claims including their veracity. Ofcom is clear that, consistent with freedom of expression, Mr Morgan was entitled to say he disbelieved the Duke and Duchess of Sussex’s allegations and to hold and express strong views that rigorously challenged their account. The Code allows for individuals to express strongly held and robustly argued views, including those that are potentially harmful or highly offensive, and for broadcasters to include these in their programming. The restriction of such views would, in our view, be an unwarranted and chilling restriction on freedom of expression both of the broadcaster and the audience.

However, in instances where such viewpoints carry a potential for harm or offence, it is the responsibility of the Licensee to ensure that adequate protection from harm and sufficient context is provided. The choice of measures used to provide such protection to viewers is an editorial matter for the broadcaster.

Ofcom's Decision in this case was finely balanced. We were concerned about the potential for harm that could arise from Mr Morgan's treatment of the Duchess of Sussex's suicidal thoughts, and the limited protections put in place by ITV, given that suicide is a significant public health concern. We were particularly concerned about Mr Morgan's approach to such an important and serious issue and his apparent disregard for the seriousness of anyone expressing suicidal thoughts. Had it not been for the extensive challenge offered throughout the Programme by Ms Reid and Mr Ship, we would have been seriously concerned. However, given the significant challenge to Mr Morgan's comments provided by other presenters and contributors in the Programme, we considered that, overall, adequate protection for viewers was provided and the potentially harmful and highly offensive material was sufficiently contextualised.

Our Decision is therefore that, on balance, the Programme was not in breach of Rules 2.1 and 2.3 in relation to the discussion on mental health and suicide.

However, we remind ITV of the need to take care when broadcasting content on sensitive issues such as suicide and mental health and the need for broadcasters to provide responsible programming which can provide viewers with adequate protection from harm. As we set out in detail above, suicide is a serious public health concern in the UK. In some instances significant challenge to potentially harmful statements alone may not be sufficient to protect audiences. In such cases a range of measures can be used to support audiences and mitigate potential harm. We therefore draw ITV's attention to Ofcom's [published guidance](#) which set out that further measures include: providing audiences with relevant information; signposting to services; or including warnings.

Race

We adopted the same approach in applying Rule 2.3 as outlined above in reaching a Decision on the discussions in the Programme around race and racism. We first considered whether there was potential for offence in the statements made during the Programme. We then went on to consider whether the potential for offence was justified by the context.

We acknowledged that discussions related to race and racism have the potential for offence but also that there is a high public interest in open and frank discussions around such important issues. These discussions can play an important role in educating viewers about people's experiences of racism, including helping them to understand where there may be racial disparities in people's treatment and to provide people with a forum to have difficult and challenging conversations about these issues.

A significant number of complaints to Ofcom related to the way that issues regarding race were handled and discussed during the Programme, in particular that Mr Morgan had: denied and belittled the Duchess of Sussex's personal account of her experiences of racism; and, questioned whether asking about the colour of her unborn baby's skin was racist, which they found highly offensive. We noted the allegations raised by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex in relation to race were discussed at length throughout the Programme. Therefore Ofcom also sought the Licensee's comments on the application of Rule 2.3 to these discussions.

As outlined above, Rule 2.3 requires broadcasters to ensure that the broadcast of potentially offensive material is justified by the context. Context includes, for example: the degree of offence likely to be caused; the service on which the programme is broadcast; its editorial content; and the likely expectations of the audience. Further, as also outlined above in relation to the issue of mental health,

contentious or controversial subjects can be discussed and analysed in programmes. Discussions related to race and racism are serious and important matters and in our view it is legitimate and in the public interest for broadcasters to explore these issues, provided the material complies with the Code.

In their complaints to Ofcom, many complainants raised that Mr Morgan was critical of the Duchess of Sussex's testimony and questioned several times her account of racism within the Royal Family in relation to her son's skin colour.

We considered that, throughout the Programme, Mr Morgan questioned aspects of the Duchess of Sussex's account of racism she said she experienced. For example, during a discussion with GMB's correspondent for North America, Noel Phillips, he challenged the Duchess of Sussex's account that: *"From the beginning of our relationship, there was this racist media treatment"* by referring to a selection of articles which had been published which he said had been *"saluting and celebrating the first bi-racial addition to the Royal Family"*. Mr Morgan repeated this point again and said: *"And yet we're now told by Meghan Markle from the beginning of the relationship, so before all this, there was just overt horrible racism aimed at them. Now, I just don't buy that. I'm sorry"*. During the interview with Ms Kelly, Mr Morgan appeared to further imply the Duchess of Sussex was being disingenuous in her testimony regarding race. Mr Morgan also said that it was *"nonsense"* for the Duchess of Sussex to imply that Archie had not received a Royal Title because of the colour of his skin. We considered that Mr Morgan's comments challenging the Duchess of Sussex's account of racism had the potential to be highly offensive to some viewers.

We also considered that during the Programme Mr Morgan made clear that his central criticism was of not knowing the context of the conversation that had sparked allegations of racism from the couple, and who the conversation was with, for example saying: *"We don't know whether it was meant malevolently or in a racist context. We don't even know what the conversation was"*. Mr Morgan said that racism towards the Duchess of Sussex was unacceptable, but challenged the couple to give clarity to their allegation by saying:

"It is incredibly damaging, and Harry's got to come out and say who said that to you then? Come on, and what did they say? What was the exact wording of what they said? Did they make a racist slur against you or not? And if they did, they shouldn't be fit to be King. So, if it's either William or Charles, they're not fit to be King if they did. So, let's have the names".

We took into account that ITV had organised for a range of guests to appear on GMB on 8 March 2021, in anticipation of the debate which arose from the Interview. Many of these guests spoke with authority on the issues of race and racism. We therefore considered that a range of opinions and views on race and racism were included throughout the Programme.

For example, the following discussion took place with guest contributor Trisha Goddard:

PM: *"...can I put to you just a scenario that may have happened, and I wonder whether you find this, you would automatically think this is offensive and racist? If you have two parents, one's White and one's Black, as in Meghan's case, and she's pregnant and going to have a*

baby, is it racist and offensive for a family member to say ‘Oh, what colour might the baby be?’ I mean, I would imagine in most families that might be a question they think and they might ask, but not, but not in a racist or derogatory manner. Now tell me, tell me if I’m wrong”.

TG: *“Why does it matter? Piers, Piers, why does it matter what colour a child is, as long the child is healthy?”*

PM: *“I’m not saying it matters. It’s just curiosity, it might just be curiosity, Trisha. In other words, it may not have been a malevolent thing to say”.*

We considered that Mr Morgan’s question about circumstances in which he said he considered it might be acceptable for the colour of an unborn child’s skin to be discussed in modern bi-racial families had the potential to be highly offensive to some viewers. This was particularly the case given it followed a series of highly charged and often heated debates throughout the Programme about Mr Morgan’s dismissive views on the Duke and Duchess of Sussex’s testimony about the Duchess of Sussex’s experience of racism. However, we acknowledged that Mr Morgan invited Ms Goddard to offer her response to his suggestion that a family speculating as to the skin colour of a baby would not automatically be racist or derogatory. Ms Goddard responded that the skin colour of a baby does not matter, leading Mr Morgan to say that he was suggesting the question could be raised as *“just curiosity”* within a family in a way that was not malevolent.

We were also mindful that Ms Goddard gave robust and direct challenge to Mr Morgan’s views about whether the allegations being made in the Interview, if accurate, amounted to racism. Ms Goddard spoke with authority about her own experiences of racism and micro-aggressions explaining behaviours which are considered as *“curiosity”* by one person may be experienced by another in a very different way.

Mr Morgan, in reiterating his view that those who were not present were not aware of the context in which the question about the colour of her unborn son’s skin was raised and asked Ms Goddard to clarify if *“any context in which that kind of conversation happened is automatically racist”*. In our view, Ms Goddard provided a strong and robust challenge in this regard to the discussion around race and racism and also directly challenged Mr Morgan’s views:

“...I know from experience, it is very painful for a White partner to see first-hand all these little microaggressions and what have you and they’re shocked. If somebody brings up ‘Yeah but what colour is your child going to be?’ and I’ve been in that situation as well, it is deeply shocking. It might not seem shocking to the person saying it –”.

“If you are working against a backdrop of non-stop stuff, it doesn’t take one straw, you know, it only takes one straw to break the camel’s back. And what gets me is why, why is everybody else such an expert about racism against Black people? I’m sorry, you know. I’m sorry, Piers, you don’t get to call out what is and isn’t racism against Black people. You

can call out all the other stuff, I will leave you to call out all the other stuff you want but leave the racism stuff to us, eh?"

When referring to the claim that the press were racist Ms Goddard said:

"But the point that I think she was making was that headline that said 'Straight Outta Compton'. Now that might not mean anything to other people but to a Black person, Chaka [Khan] you'd understand this, it is, it is very painful. It's saying 'you're ghetto', that 'you're rough' and other people might laugh it off but remember, if you've lived with this background bubbling away..."

Ms Goddard's robust challenge of Mr Morgan expressed a view of many within minority ethnic communities who consider it their prerogative, and not that of others, to define what is racist. In Ofcom's view, Ms Goddard therefore provided a significant counterpoint and challenge to Mr Morgan's repeated dismissal of the Duchess of Sussex's testimony about her experience of racism.

We also took into account that during an exchange with Mr Morgan, Dr Mos-Shogbamimu challenged him directly on whether it was acceptable to discuss the colour of a baby's skin. We note that Mr Morgan said in this exchange Dr Mos-Shogbamimu had misquoted him, however the exchange in itself provided a strong challenge to Mr Morgan's views:

"Now, there are going to be many White people who will watch this interview and come away with 'That wasn't racist'. The fact that someone in the Royal Family or there were conversations in the Royal Family about the colour or tone of Archie's skin. Listening to Piers saying 'Oh, that should be normal'. This is exactly how racism is normalised in the United Kingdom".

Dr Mos-Shogbamimu also directly challenged some of the other views Mr Morgan had expressed on racism. In particular, she said:

"You are more outraged that Harry and Meghan had the audacity to speak their truth than you should be at the actual outrage of racism".

We also took into account the following conversation between Mr Morgan and Dr Mos-Shogbamimu:

SM: *"You constant, you constantly use your platform as a wealthy White privileged man with power to influence, to aggravate –"*

PM: *"Oh, what a load of nonsense, honestly. What a load of race baiting nonsense".*

SM: *" – the bigoted, sexist, racist and the misogynist attacks on Meghan Markle – "*

PM: *"What a load of race baiting nonsense".*

SM: *“ – and you do it so shamelessly”.*

Several other contributors also provided direct challenge to Mr Morgan’s statements and questions about the experience of racism, to mitigate any potential offence. For example, during the Programme:

- Chris Ship made clear that in the Interview both the Duke and Duchess of Sussex had interpreted questioning about their unborn baby’s skin colour as racist, and therefore the context in which the question was asked was irrelevant.
- Chaka Khan said: *“no one can talk about what’s going on in her mind and heart, unless you’re standing in her shoes”.*

On the issue of race as discussed in this Programme, we considered the broadcaster had taken steps to ensure that any comments which may have potentially caused offence were sufficiently contextualised within the Programme. The Programme included several contributors who could speak decisively and with authority on racial issues, meaning a range of views were included within the Programme and on a number of occasions Mr Morgan’s comments were directly challenged.

We took into account ITV’s representations that during the programme broadcast on 9 March 2021, Mr Beresford (“AB”) had explained “he did not believe Piers Morgan was racist, but there had clearly been a concern by the Duchess of Sussex about the way the question about the colour of her child’s skin was asked”. We acknowledged that during an exchange with Mr Morgan, Mr Beresford provided his own account of when a former work colleague had asked him about his own son’s skin colour and that he *“fully understood the hurt behind all of that”* and this was the reason the Duchess of Sussex’s account had resonated with him. Mr Beresford also said:

“And when you’re mixed race what you find, in my personal experience and there may be other people that may come forward and say this, is that when you are a lighter shade of Black, people gain confidence and feel that they can say things to you that they wouldn’t say to a Black person”.

Mr Morgan and Mr Beresford also spoke about whether there were differences in the way in which a question around skin colour could be asked and while Mr Beresford agreed there were, he also expressed that it appeared that the Duke and Duchess of Sussex had interpreted the line of questioning in their case in a *“negative way”*:

AB *“Do you know how much courage it takes to actually speak about racism? To actually call it out? Because I’ve been in situations where I haven’t called out every single bit of racism that’s happened to me based on how I’ve been treated or how it was handled in the past”.*

SR: *“Because you’re worried about a backlash”.*

AB: *“And you’re also worried about a backlash and there will be people that will treat Harry and Meghan differently because they’ve spoken out”.*

PM: *“OK”.*

AB: *“But this is the whole thing, we’ve got to get comfortable talking about the uncomfortable. And that’s why it’s important for me and you to have this conversation...”*

Mr Beresford also later said that it was important to remember that it was *“their lived experience”* and that people *“don’t always want to accept that it’s a possibility that something like this has happened and this is a thing with racism”*.

We considered these exchanges between Mr Beresford and Mr Morgan on 9 March 2021 around race further challenged the comments made by Mr Morgan about race the previous day. However, as they came the following day and not in the Programme itself, we considered they had lesser effect in mitigating the potential for offence.

Overall, Ofcom considered that there is a high public interest value in broadcasting open and frank discussions about race and racism, as long as they comply with the Code. As set out above, we also considered that the Interview between the Duke and Duchess of Sussex and Oprah Winfrey contained serious allegations and it was legitimate for this Programme to discuss and scrutinise those claims. While we acknowledged that Mr Morgan’s questions about the nature of racism had the potential to be highly offensive to some viewers, the conversations about race and racism in this Programme provided open debate on the issues raised by the Interview. We also considered that the Programme allowed for an important discussion to be had on the nature and impact of racism. ITV had clearly anticipated that racial issues would be discussed at length as part of the coverage of the Interview and had taken steps to ensure context could be provided during the discussions. Despite strong opinions expressed during the Programme, in Ofcom’s view any potential offence was justified by the context and the comments and discussions about race and racism were not in breach of Rule 2.3 of the Code.

Not in Breach of Rules 2.1 and 2.3 in relation to the discussion on mental health and suicide.

Not in Breach of Rule 2.3 in relation to the debate about race and racism.

Annex: Programme summaries

Monday 8 March 2021

The programme opened with the regular half hour news section presented by Good Morning Britain (“GMB”) news presenter, Ms Charlotte Hawkins (CH). A clip from the interview was played, in which the Duchess of Sussex (DS) was seen having the following exchange with Ms Oprah Winfrey (OW) about her mental health:

DS: *“And I, I just didn’t, I just didn’t want to be alive anymore”.*

OW: *“So, were you thinking of harming yourself? Were you having suicidal thoughts”?*

DS: *“Yes, this was very, very clear”.*

OW: *“Wow”.*

As the clip from the interview was played, an on-screen slate was shown which read *“Meghan “suicidal”*”. Ms Hawkins discussed the story with correspondents and presented the rest of the day’s news, followed by the weather.

At 06:32, presenters Mr Piers Morgan (PM) and Ms Susanna Reid (SR) joined the programme and discussed parts of the interview, as follows:

PM: *“Well, good morning Britain. Just gone half past six. Welcome to the programme. Well –”*

SR: *“Good luck everybody because it’s going to be something of a ride”.*

PM: *“I’ve got to say, I’m, I’m angry to the point of boiling over today. I’m sickened by what I’ve just had to watch”.*

SR: *“OK, a number of people might be –”*

PM: *“No, no, sorry”.*

SR: *“– might be upset and moved by what they’ve heard”.*

PM: *“You can defend it in a minute. I’m just going to say what I’m going to say”.*

SR: *“OK”.*

PM: *“This is a two-hour trashathon of our Royal Family, of the monarchy, of everything the Queen has worked so hard for. And it’s all being done as Prince Philip lies in hospital. They trash everybody. They basically make out the entire Royal Family are a bunch of white supremacists by dropping this race bombshell without –”*

SR: *“They didn’t use that phrase”.*

PM: *"They didn't name any, they didn't name which one it was. They just throw it out there so it could be any member of the Royal Family and Harry says 'I'll never say who it was'. Well, you better say it fast".*

SR: *"What's the part of the interview that you're referring to?"*

PM: *"The bit where they accuse the, an unnamed member of the Royal Family, this is the race bombshell that Meghan drops and that Harry then talks about. Let's watch".*

A clip from the interview was then played of the Duchess of Sussex speaking to Ms Winfrey:

DS: *"And also concerns and conversations about how dark his skin might be when he's born".*

OW: *"What?"*

DS: *"And –"*

OW: *"Who, who is having that conversation with you?"*

OW: *"Hold, hold up".*

DS: *"There were several, there were several conversations about it".*

OW: *"There's a conversation with you –"*

DS: *"With Harry".*

OW: *"- about how dark your baby is going to be?"*

DS: *"Potentially, and what that would mean or look like".*

OW: *"Oooh. And you're not going to tell me who had the conversation?"*

DS: *"I think that would be very damaging to them".*

OW: *"So how, how does one have that meeting?" [Laughter]*

DS: *"That was relayed to me from Harry. Those were conversations that family had with him".*

The programme immediately cut to a second clip of the interview when the Duke (PH) joined the Duchess and Ms Winfrey.

OW: *"Meghan shared with us that there was a conversation with you about Archie's skin tone".*

PH: *"Mm hm".*

OW: *"What was that conversation?"*

PH: *"That conversation, I'm never going to share. Um, but at the time, at the time it was awkward, I was a bit shocked. Um –"*

OW: *"Can you tell us what the question was?"*

PH: *"No. I'm not comfortable sharing that".*

At the end of the clips the GMB presenters continued to discuss what was said:

PM: *"It's odd though, because you were comfortable about sharing everything else in that interview. And you're prepared to let that bombshell just lie, completely unanswered so that we now have to think it could be any one of the Royal Family that was apparently racist about the skin colour of your, of your child. I just don't think that's acceptable. They trash Kate, she's taken down. She apparently made poor Meghan cry. She trashes her. They trash Prince Charles –"*

SR: *"Well, that's in response to a question –"*

PM: *"– they trash William –"*

SR: *"– about the story –"*

PM: *"– they trash the monarchy, the institution".*

SR: *"– that Meghan made Kate cry".*

PM: *"And you know what, we're going to bring in Chris Ship here. Chris, I, I've got to say, I watched this interview, a. with my jaw drop dropping like everybody else, but, b. with mounting anger. Mainly because I could see the way it is already playing in America and around the world. This is a caricature portrait of our monarchy and Royal Family which I think is contemptable, I've got to be honest with you".*

SR: *"OK, can I, you've said that you wanted your say and we've let you had your say. Can I just have my say as well on this? They have dropped bombshells, no doubt about it. They have described what they said was an almost un-survivable experience. They have both said that they felt controlled within the Royal Family, that they felt trapped, that they felt at risk, that their security was removed. Race, obviously, they claim, played a part in that and they made very serious accusations, as Piers says. Um, but Meghan has within this interview said it got so bad that she was suicidal. And I think a lot of people will feel extremely concerned about that. Let's just have a listen to that".*

A clip from the interview was played:

DS: *"And I, I just didn't, I just didn't want to be alive anymore".*

OW: *"So, were you thinking of harming yourself? Were you having suicidal thoughts?"*

DS: *"Yes, this was very, very clear".*

OW: *"Wow".*

DS: *"I went to the institution and I said that I needed to go somewhere to get help. I said that I'd never felt this way before and I need to go somewhere. And I was told that I couldn't, that it wouldn't be good for the institution".*

The presenters then continued to discuss the interview with Royal Editor, Mr Chris Ship (CS):

PM: *"OK, again, let's have the names. Who did you go to? What did they say to you? I'm sorry, I don't believe a word she says, Meghan Markle. I wouldn't believe it if she read me a weather report".*

SR: *"Well that's a pretty unsympathetic reaction to someone who has expressed those thoughts".*

PM: *"And the fact that she's fired up this, this onslaught against our Royal Family I think is contemptable. Chris, you're the impartial Royal Editor".*

SR: *"It's a shame you're not sitting between us, frankly".*

CS: *"I think I should, do you want to swap now? Listen, when I, when I put my keyboard down, as it were, at three o'clock this morning after I stopped watching it live, I was kind of paralysed in my seat for a little bit. There was a lot to take in. I mean, that's an understatement, isn't it? I mean, someone saying that they had suicidal thoughts, I don't think you can say that she was lying at that point. She had these thoughts, pretty serious ones. She took them to HR. Now look, we talked last week about Buckingham Palace's HR department. What did they do about the victims when this bullying complaint against Meghan was put in? I don't think Buckingham Palace's HR department comes out very well at all".*

PM: *"Her camp refused, well, hang on, on that point Chris, her camp immediately said 'They can't be believed. Those victims can't be believed'. And yet we're supposed to believe everything Meghan Markle now says about her own terrible ordeal of bullying and racism and all the rest of it? You can't have it both ways. We're not allowed to believe the apparent victims of her own bullying, but we have to believe everything she says".*

SR: *"Well, let's take all of these claims and accusations seriously".*

CS: *"Yes, let's do one by one".*

SR: *"There is this claim that she felt suicidal, and I just don't think you can brush over that and say, and not take it seriously".*

CS: *"Agreed, yep".*

SR: *"For whatever reason, she was very, she felt very vulnerable, and it seems that when she asked for help, it was, the response was 'We can't do that because that wouldn't look good'".*

CS: *"Well, not only that it wouldn't look good but they said to her, according to Meghan, that 'We can't help you with your suicidal thoughts. We can see that you're suffering but the reason that we can't help you is because you're not a paid member of the Royal Family. In other words, if you were a footman or someone in the kitchens, we could do something about it. Because you're a member of the family, you're the wife of Prince Harry, we couldn't'. Which I thought was quite extraordinary. Why don't those systems exist? Because, you know, Royal Family members are only human and if she's reached that level of stress that she's thinking about taking her own life, where are the systems to look after them? What's in place? And basically, she said there was nothing at all".*

SR: *"And then we have the accusations against the Royal Family and particularly this claim of a conversation that Harry had with an unnamed member of the Royal Family about the skin colour of their children. Now that is going to be devastating".*

CS: *"It's incendiary, I mean –"*

PM: *"Sorry, that claim is going to be devastating –"*

SR: *"Yes".*

CS: *"Yes".*

PM: *"– in the way it's been depicted in that interview".*

SR: *"Yes".*

PM: *"We don't know the context of that conversation".*

CS: *"According to Meghan but also according to Harry as well –"*

PM: *"We don't know it definitely happened. I'm not taking anything they said at face value, I'm afraid. I think it's completely self-serving. So let's make it a claim, in the same way that everything about them that's negative, they portray as nonsense, tabloid, rumour mill, and a claim, so let's play the same game with them. Right, fair enough?"*

CS: *"Although it's come from their mouth, I mean, you know, a lot of –"*

PM: *"That doesn't make it true. This is, this is their truth –"*

CS: *"– claims in the tabloids previously didn't come from their own mouth".*

PM: *"That doesn't make it true, what they're saying, does it?"*

SR: *"No, but we have to take seriously what is said in this interview, in the same way as we take stories about allegations of bullying seriously".*

PM: *"Only last week, Susanna, we were told we couldn't, by her lawyers – M"*

SR: *"By, yes –"*

PM: *"– we couldn't take seriously –"*

SR: *"– yeah, but we don't, but Piers –"*

PM: *"– the very serious claims of bullying by Meghan Markle. You can't have it both ways".*

SR: *"– we don't have to be told what to do. We decide what we take –"*

PM: *"So we take seriously everything, alright –"*

SR: *"Yes, we take claims and allegations very seriously".*

PM: *"So we take everything they say seriously but any claims against her or him we're not allowed to take seriously".*

SR: *"Except we do take those claims seriously".*

PM: *"Do we?"*

SR: *"Yes. We do".*

PM: *"They didn't. They didn't".*

SR: *"We discuss them on the programme and they are being –"*

PM: *"Their legal team last week said we weren't allowed to take seriously claims of bullying".*

SR: *"But Piers, that's for them. We're journalists. We do things differently. We take everything seriously –"*

PM: *"Well, thanks for the lecture on journalism".*

SR: *"– and interrogate everything".*

PM: *"Yeah".*

SR: *"So let's take these claims seriously".*

CS: *"What would you do if you had one of the victims of bullying in here right now? Would you tell them that they were lying about their bullying claims?"*

SR: *"No, we would take their claims seriously. Exactly right".*

CS: *"You would take it seriously because she was saying that not only did she have this mental health crisis that led her to suicide but also that, it was a conversation that Harry had with his family members. I should be clear here; I've been told it's not the Queen and not the Duke of Edinburgh".*

PM: *"But how do we know which one it is?"*

CS: *"So that only leaves, that only leaves two family members".*

PM: *"But how do you know that?"*

CS: *"Because that's what I've been told".*

PM: *"Yeah but how does that person know?"*

CS: *"My job is to find out things. That's what I do and I'm not going to share my sources with you here".*

PM: *"OK so now we're, now we're left with who? Charles? William? Kate?"*

CS: *"Well this, I was about to explain that".*

SR: *"Piers".*

CS: *"So, the two people that you're left with is either his father, Prince Charles, or his brother, Prince William, or their wives. I mean, that's pretty serious. That's kind of where it's left. They've protected the Queen. The thing is, they've protected the Queen throughout this by saying the Queen did nice, we have –"*

SR: *"They have an amazing relationship with her, they have Zoom calls".*

CS: *"– we have lovely Zoom calls with the Queen. But equally they are criticising the institution of which she is head and therefore –"*

PM: *"They are trashing everything she stands for".*

CS: *"– you're criticising his grandmother, the Queen".*

PM: *"And they're saying that Charles and William are trapped, they have no wish to be King presumably. They're trapped in this terrible institution. An institution the Queen has worked so dutifully and worked so hard to maintain and preserve. The damage to the monarchy here should not be underestimated. I've been watching the reaction in America since this*

came out. That race allegation in particular, I think this is going to be used as an incredibly damaging stick against the Royal Family”.

CS: *“It already was last week. I mean I was watching, their equivalent of Loose Women is called The View in America. They’d already formed their view on that programme last week even just from the couple of clips that we had –”*

PM: *“All of them, all of them”.*

CS: *“– of Meghan Markle and were saying that the Royal Family has a lot to answer for”.*

The presenters continued to discuss the interview with GMB’s correspondent for North America, Mr Noel Phillips (NP):

SR: *“Well, Noel Phillips is our correspondent, um, for North America, so you are watching this from the perspective of those in America who, as Chris says, there’s almost a sense over there of ‘Meghan is one of us and the Royal Family has serious questions to answer’. What is your perspective?”*

NP: *“Well I think, listen, I was at Harry and Meghan’s wedding back in 2019 and I saw first-hand the fairy-tale getting underway. Them riding along in the carriage and it was a really joyous moment reporting on their wedding and to see the position of brand Harry and Meghan and where they are now is quite troubling. The big question that I’m asking myself having watched that interview is perhaps was there a much better way for them to go about addressing their concerns? Is a 90-minute sit down with Oprah Winfrey the way to go about airing your difficulties that you are having with members within your family? Perhaps not. But there is also a fundamental question. Meghan feels as a Black woman she was mistreated. She didn’t feel as though she was given the support and I think this all comes back down to her background, who she is, who she was, and she just felt she was side-lined and repeatedly, repeatedly overruled in whatever she wanted to do”.*

PM: *“Alright, Noel, Noel, let me ask you this”.*

NP: *“She also talked about –”*

PM: *“Noel, you were at, you were at the Royal wedding. I covered, I wrote about it too for the Mail on Sunday. And she says at one stage in this interview ‘From the beginning of our relationship, there was this racist media treatment’. I just want to show our viewers to remind everybody, this is the spread of front pages on their engagement and their wedding”.*

Newspaper front pages were shown on screen.

PM: *"You will not see a bigger collection of more euphoric or ecstatic front pages embracing and saluting and celebrating the first bi-racial addition to the Royal Family, ever. I've never seen it. And yet we're now told by Meghan Markle from the beginning of the relationship, so before all this, there was just overt horrible racism aimed at them. Now, I just don't buy that. I'm sorry. There was a lot of criticism after the wedding to do with a number of things that then happened. But this context –"*

SR: *"Well, she said there was a tipping point six or seven months after the wedding, didn't she?"*

PM: *"– but this context that there was this systematic media race campaign against them. I just don't think it's true".*

NP: *"Piers, I think fundamentally perhaps the, the tone of coverage that Meghan received after the wedding, because again, we look back at those headlines, they were complimentary, we were all wrapping her our arms around Meghan and embracing her and welcoming her. She was seen as a breath of fresh air. She was that diverse Black woman who was going to modernise the British monarchy and obviously months later, or perhaps a year or so later, that all changed. I think what we're seeing Meghan Markle doing is trying to highlight the difficulties, not just in her relationship with the media but also with an institution that she struggled to really try and get to grips with. I mean, in the interview, she also talks about the fact that she didn't know that she had to curtsy when she meets the Queen and also she had to go onto Google to try and, you know, to read up about the National Anthem. Nobody within the institution was telling her these fundamental basic things. And I think that those were questions that perhaps –"*

PM: *"But why wasn't her husband telling her? Sorry, sorry, but Noel, why wasn't the bloke that she was sleeping with telling her? He's Prince Harry".*

SR: *"That's a weird way of describing it".*

PM: *"Why wasn't he, well sorry, I presume they were sleeping together. Why wasn't he telling her, that you've got to curtsy in front of my granny until five minutes before he meets, he meets, she meets her for the first time? There are so many contradictions in this interview. On the one hand, we're told they are constantly tormented by the vicious tabloid headlines. On the other, they keep telling us they never read any of it, so I'm not quite sure how that works. We're constantly told that, on the money side, the only reason that they did these multi-million-dollar deals with Netflix and Spotify was to pay for the security".*

- SR: *“Mhmm, which had been withdrawn from them”.*
- PM: *“It’s just complete nonsense”.*
- SR: *“Well, Chris Ship, is it complete nonsense?”*
- PM: *“This is disingenuous nonsense”.*
- SR: *“Because this is, this is an important factor. It’s also one of the things that she refers to when she talks about Archie not being made of Prince and she was concerned about protecting him. Let’s have a listen”.*

A clip of the Duchess from the interview was then played, as follows:

- DS: *“The idea of the first member of colour in this family not being titled in the same way that other grandchildren would be, you know. The other piece of that conversation is there’s a convention, I don’t know if it’s the George V or George VI convention that when you’re the grandchild of the monarch, so when Harry’s dad becomes King, automatically Archie and our next baby would become Prince or Princess”.*
- DS: *“While I was pregnant, they said they want to change the convention for Archie. Well, why?”*
- DS: *“Even though I have a lot of clarity on what comes with the titles, good and bad, and from my experience a lot of pain, I again wouldn’t wish pain on my child, but that is their birth right to then make a choice about”.*

The presenters then continued:

- PM: *“So, she hates the title. She hates the pain, even though it’s brought her hundreds of millions of dollars. But she still wants her boy to be called Prince, even though that, as I understand it, has never been the convention. This is another load of old flannel, isn’t it?”*
- CS: *“No, because basically the grandchildren of the monarch automatically get HRH title. They automatically get Prince or Princess. So, Harry automatically got it because he’s the grandchild of the Queen. When Prince Charles becomes King, obviously Archie is going to be a grandchild of the monarch, and he would automatically get it under this current convention. But what she’s saying –”*
- SR: *“But Prince William’s children are Princes and Princesses”.*
- CS: *“Yes, because George is in line to the throne and the Queen had to actively intervene in order to give it to Charlotte and Louis. For Archie, what Meghan is alleging there, that Buckingham Palace were actively*

trying to change the rules so that, when Prince Charles is King, that Archie isn't a Prince".

PM: *"Just to punish her child".*

CS: *"Well, she said –"*

PM: *"Because potentially –"*

CS: *"She alleges it's because of the colour of his skin. That's what she said".*

PM: *"It's utter –"*

SR: *"That is incendiary".*

PM: *"It's nonsense".*

CS: *"It's what she said. She said there that it was because the colour of his skin, she alluded to it quite strongly, that's why they want to –"*

PM: *"A bunch of racists –"*

SR: *"There was also concern –"*

PM: *"- want Archie not to be a Prince in the palace because of the colour of his skin. Are we supposed to believe this?"*

SR: *"She was also concerned that if he doesn't become, if he's not a Prince, that he wouldn't receive the same level of security, right?"*

CS: *"There was a lot on security in there, not only when they went, for example, to Canada and Harry had it removed, they had their sort of, you know, taxpayer-funded police protection officers removed basically in last March before they left".*

PM: *"Because they'd given up royal duty, Chris".*

SR: *"Yes but that didn't stop them, stop Harry being in the line of succession –"*

CS: *"Well Meghan said, Meghan said they –"*

SR: *"– and still at risk –"*

CS: *"– so their threats, they were still at threat".*

SR: *"We had that argument at the time, Piers".*

PM: *"So, use your own money".*

CS: *"And he has".*

PM: *"He got left tens of millions by his mother. He's been given tens of millions, I understand –"*

SR: *"The reason he is a target –"*

PM: *"– hang on, he's been given tens of millions by his father".*

SR: *"– and is at risk is because of his position in the Royal Family".*

PM: *"These two have been propped up financially by other people for, throughout their relationship. We know this from the massive amount of money he got left by Diana when she died and by the huge amount of money that Prince Charles has given them".*

CS: *"Prince Charles' money, he said quite clearly in there, stopped in the middle of last year –"*

PM: *"Because they gave up royal duty".*

CS: *"– he got a fund to sort of relocate them, I suppose, to California. And, you know, Princess Diana's money, I thought what was quite interesting he said about Princess Diana. He's kind of, he's said that he thought his mum could see this coming".*

SR: *"Yes".*

CS: *"And he also said he thought he could feel some of his mum with him during this process".*

SR: *"Well, there's so many echoes of Princess Diana here, not just what he says about he was worried about history repeating itself with his wife and also he said there was then the added elements of race and social media when it came to Meghan, but also echoes of her interview a couple of decades ago now with Martin Bashir and how she felt isolated within the Royal Family".*

CS: *"I mean, I haven't quite kind of reached a conclusion on this at the moment. Is this worse than Princess Diana's interview with Martin Bashir in 1995? I kind of think it might be".*

PM: *"I think it is".*

SR: *"It is".*

PM: *"I think it is".*

SR: *"I think we can all agree it is".*

PM: *"I think the –"*

CS: *"Because of what they are accusing them of doing".*

PM: *"I think the fact that she is trying to portray the Royal Family as a bunch of racists is the most incendiary charge I've seen against the Royal Family in my, certainly in my career as a journalist, and it appears to be based on one conversation with an unnamed member of the Royal Family at the very start, when they first got together. We don't know anything about the context".*

CS: *"Well, it was a conversation that Harry had with a very close member of his family, possibly his father or, or possibly his brother, that was clearly what Meghan said. It, Harry didn't deny it when he was asked directly by Oprah about it as well".*

SR: *"It wasn't a conversation had with Meghan".*

CS: *"It wasn't a conversation had with Meghan".*

SR: *"It was one with Harry".*

CS: *"It was a conversation that Harry relayed to Meghan after he'd spoken to members of his family".*

PM: *"As Ruth on email just messaged us, 'As a mother of three mixed race children, the colour of their skin was often speculated about, just like you discuss hair or eye colour. Racist? Absolutely not'. I think there'll be a lot of people in this country, we are a very multiracial country. There are lots of families in this country who have a White parent and a Black parent. You're thinking their families may not, at one stage have speculated? So, we don't know the context, do we?"*

SR: *"No".*

CS: *"You're right".*

PM: *"We don't know whether it was meant malevolently or in a racist context. We don't even know what the conversation was".*

CS: *"We don't know that, but you know how Meghan and Harry took it".*

SR: *"Yes".*

CS: *"Now, that's their interpretation. I don't know exactly what words were used – "*

PM: *"Or are they now using it –"*

CS: *"– but we know for sure what they took".*

PM: *"Or are they now using it to portray the monarchy as a racist institution? Because that's the way this is playing out around the world. It is incredibly damaging, and Harry's got to come out and say who said that*

to you then? Come on, and what did they say? What was the exact wording of what they said? Did they make a racist slur against you or not? And if they did, they shouldn't be fit to be King. So if it's either William or Charles, they're not fit to be King if they did. So let's have the names. Throughout this, they've dropped everybody else under the bus –

- CS: *"I remember him saying that he wouldn't go there, he wouldn't say. I mean, he was asked by Oprah 'Who was it? What did they say?' and he wouldn't go there".*
- SR: *"Well, Meghan said at the beginning it was several conversations. Harry made mention of one conversation, that conversation, and said 'I am never going to share, at the time it was awkward, I was a bit shocked'".*
- PM: *"So we have to keep guessing for the rest of our lives that one of our future Kings may be a racist. Really? It's disgraceful. Honestly, and to do this to the Queen, I'm sorry to mention this again, to do this to the Queen, to trash everything she stands for and the monarchy –"*
- SR: *"Well –"*
- PM: *"– and the institution and everything, everything she worked so hard for as Philip lies in hospital is contemptible".*
- SR: *"The thing is, throughout the interview –"*
- PM: *"And I don't care frankly from any backlash I get for saying this, it has got to be said".*
- SR: *"– throughout the interview –"*
- PM: *"This is "their truth". This is not actually their truth. It's a series of unsubstantiated allegations which cut right to the heart of our Royal Family –"*
- SR: *"Well –"*
- PM: *"– which they know it is unlikely our Royal Family can publicly respond to. Now, interesting, isn't it, Oprah said at the start, nothing is off limits, but not a single question about the way Meghan Markle's treated her own family, and in particular her father".*
- SR: *"Although she mentions she has lost her father during the interview".*
- PM: *"Yeah but not one question about what went on with her father, nothing about her family. Harry just lets his wife trash his family on global television".*
- SR: *"But they are –"*

PM: *"Portraying them as a bunch of ruthless bullying racist –"*

SR: *"– hang on, hang on –"*

PM: *"No sorry, I'm not going to hold on".*

SR: *"They were also very positive about the Queen –"*

PM: *"Oh, while trashing everything she stands for".*

SR: *"– saying they have an amazing relationship".*

PM: *"Please".*

SR: *"They have Zoom conversations –"*

PM: *"Please".*

SR: *"– with the Queen".*

PM: *"The Queen is lovely, but we hate everything she stands for. We hate it. The bullying, racist, nasty institution that drove us out. Is it hell? That's not why they left. They left it because they didn't fancy doing wet Wednesday royal duty in Stoke. They fancy living in an \$11 million California mansion, which is where they're living. They've got everything they wanted".*

SR: *"Is it –"*

PM: *"They've got hundreds of millions of dollars. They've got the big mansion".*

SR: *"OK".*

PM: *"They've got their happy family. They've got their celebrity chums. And yet they're still whining".*

SR: *"Is it possible to imagine –"*

PM: *"It's never enough for these two".*

SR: *"Is it possible to imagine that they felt unsupported within the Royal Family? That they felt let down? That they felt that the coverage was toxic and unpleasant and had tinges of racism and that they felt that they couldn't cope within the Royal Family. Is it possible to understand that?"*

PM: *"Is it possible to understand how two such private people, who've been suing everyone left, right and centre for the last two years over privacy, would now give two hours of the most gut-wrenching, dirty laundry spewing, private information to the world about their family?"*

SR: *"Because they want their side of the story out there".*

PM: *"Oh, it's "their truth". No, it's not. It's their hypocrisy. That's what it is. It's their rank hypocrisy".*

SR: *"She describes herself as very vulnerable".*

PM: *"They've spilled more privacy secrets about the Royal Family in those two hours than I've seen in the last 20 years. I mean, Chris, you're a royal expert. We were talking about the Panorama thing but honestly, my jaw was hitting the floor with this stuff. This is the stuff, imagine if it was your family or mine. I'm just trying to think, imagine if you had members of your family on global telly spewing all this stuff out about you".*

CS: *"Yeah, I was kind of thinking, if, I mean, my understanding was that no member of the Royal Family were, were going to stay up through the night like I did to watch it. But I wonder what the Queen's media breakfast briefing is going to be like this morning, or quite how she's going to receive it".*

PM: *"I think she'll be very hurt".*

SR: *"I just can't imagine how hurtful –"*

PM: *"The Queen will be very hurt".*

SR: *"It's hurtful for them –"*

CS: *"The next Zoom call they're going to have is going to be a bit more difficult than the previous ones. They're not going to be asking for waffle makers on this Zoom call".*

PM: *"On the day after the Queen addresses the nation about the Commonwealth, which she's incredibly proud of –"*

SR: *"Unity and friendship".*

PM: *"– now, now that Commonwealth is being led to believe she presides over a racist institution. That's the bottom line from this interview".*

SR: *"That doesn't take seriously somebody who felt suicidal and doesn't help them –"*

CS: *"And also –"*

SR: *"– doesn't reach out to help them with therapy".*

CS: *"And also Meghan accused the other members of the Royal Family of lying about them. Effectively, the whole Kate, you know, the whole thing*

we had before was that Meghan made Kate cry. Well, Meghan flipped it on its head yesterday or last night and said, 'It was her that made me cry'".

SR: *"Kate making Meghan cry, yeah".*

CS: *"And yet that the family knew that, she claims, and you know, Kate sent her flowers, she said. And yet no member of the family tried to correct the narrative that was out there and that was the kind of support again and again that they didn't get".*

SR: *"They lied to protect other people".*

PM: *"Harry actually said 'We tried to educate them'. This is about his father and his brother. 'We tried to educate them and we tried to protect them', says Meghan. Really? You call this protecting the Royal Family?"*

SR: *"Well they didn't feel protected –"*

PM: *"Protecting the monarchy? What a load of sanctimonious guff. Anyway, you may disagree with me. We can watch the whole thing tonight on ITV. We'll be having a lot more clips throughout the programme today. I'm pretty incensed by what I've just seen. I think is the worst betrayal of our Royal Family I've ever seen. Maybe you have a different view".*

SR: *"I'm pretty shaken, I have to say, by what I've seen".*

PM: *"Maybe you think it's just poor old Megs and Harry, the two biggest victims. In the world in the middle of a global pandemic, as Prince Philip lies in hospital, they're the biggest victims that we know. They're the ones we should feel sorry for as they sleep in their Californian mansion".*

SR: *"You'll hear more from both sides of the story after this. See you in a moment".*

Later, at 07:05, the presenters spoke to American journalist, Ms Megyn Kelly (MK):

PM: *"Well, good morning Britain. This is the interview that's got the whole world going".*

SR: *"It's certainly got us going".*

PM: *"Meghan and Harry spray gunning Harry's family. Noticed she didn't spray gun her own, because they could answer back of course. But he spray gunned Harry's family. Took them all down, basically. Called the Royal Family a bunch of liars, racists. Very, very, very shocking revelations".*

SR: *"Particularly that –"*

PM: *"Like I say, maybe I'm alone on this. I think it's deeply unedifying. We will debate this in a moment".*

SR: *"There's also going to be a lot of sympathy for the Duchess of Sussex. You may not feel it".*

PM: *"You feel it, really, after that?"*

SR: *"Well, she says –"*

PM: *"Do you? Serious question. Do you feel genuine sympathy with Meghan Markle and Prince Harry after watching that load of bilge?"*

SR: *"Anyone who says that they were left feeling suicidal –"*

PM: *"OK".*

SR: *"– didn't want to be alive anymore, you have to feel sympathy for them. Um, let's talk to Megyn Kelly. She hosts the Megyn Kelly Show podcast. And, Megyn, you came over to cover Harry and Meghan's royal wedding for NBC's morning show Today. And that was a time when there was universal, I'd say, love and admiration for the couple. But they say it all went downhill from there and, you know, she has made some pretty explosive accusations and allegations, not just about the Royal Family but about the impact that it had on them. Will she, will they, get sympathy or criticism over in the States, which loves the Royal Family? What do they feel about the couple?"*

MK: *"I think over here it's breaking down by party. The more conservative-leaning people are against them and the more liberal people are for them and against the monarchy. So, it's sort of the same today as it was yesterday. But I'll tell you, just watching it myself, and I was one of the people on the streets rooting for them, delighted that this was happening, right. It was exciting. She was an American, she's a person of colour, it looked like the modernisation of the British monarchy. The British people adored her. I saw them, I interviewed them. But what I saw tonight was somebody who was totally un-self-aware. I mean, completely unaware of how she sounded. Right, like 'I wasn't planning on saying anything shocking, except for my husband's racist family almost drove me to suicidal thoughts while I was pregnant with my baby. And by the way, I had no idea what the internet said about Harry'. Nobody believes that. 'And I thought meeting the Queen was going to be just like meeting a celebrity in Los Angeles, like meeting a Kris Jenner'. Right, like, nobody believes that. And she goes on to say like 'I'm not, I don't believe in any of the grandeur', you know. There's an article already up in the New York Post here in the States saying 'This is the person who had Clooney and Oprah at her wedding even though she didn't even know them, and then covered herself in blood diamonds*

from the Saudi Prince', so like spare us that you're not into any of the grandeur. And then, while she's spinning this tale about how tough she had it in the castle, how lonely she was in the castle, um, she's, she's painting herself in, sort of, these adorations, like 'I'm, it was incredibly courageous of me to come forward about my depression and I just love saving things'. And it was, like, it was just peppered with these compliments of herself while she was making these complaints that will be totally unrelatable to 99% of the people out there".

PM: *"Yeah, you know what Meg, I couldn't have put that better myself, so. But mainly because it's the level of disingenuousness. And Harry also, you know. To a point, I expected all this from Meghan Markle, I could almost have scripted what she was going to do. Mental health, race, all the hot button things were going to be played against the Royal Family. There'd be no names, they wouldn't name people on that. They'd just leave it hanging so we can look at all the Royal Family and the whole palace staff as a bunch of callous racists. And that's exactly what she did, and I expected all that, and I expected all the layers of hypocrisy. Prince Harry is the one that I'm staggered by. As his grandfather lies in hospital, aged 99, entering his third or fourth week now. Clearly been very seriously ill, had a heart procedure a few days ago. The Queen must be worried sick about her husband. And the Queen and Prince Philip have worked so hard for seven decades now to preserve the monarchy. And in two hours, Prince Harry has allowed his wife to trash everything that they stand for. I just don't get what he's thinking".*

MK: *"Well then, meanwhile, her implication is somebody in the Royal Family objected to her having a baby of colour. I mean, right here, the speculation on Twitter is that it was, that it was Prince Philip, right. So, I don't know who it was. But while the guy's in the hospital, you might, you might want to put like a corral around him and say, 'I can tell you it's not the suffering 99-year-old'. I don't, something, right, to, like, throw the guy a bone. But the other thing about Harry, Piers, is that he is, his biggest complaint and her biggest complaint was 'We were worried about the security. We were worried about the security of our son. Why would they take it away? Why wouldn't they make him a Prince? By the way, I care nothing about titles at all, but why wasn't my son a damn Prince?' OK, so you were worried about security. And then Harry's saying, 'All I had was my mother's inheritance'. So I looked that up. It's about 15, 16 million dollars. So you're telling the American public, the British public right now, we're supposed to feel sorry for you because you couldn't find a way to pay for your own security when you haven't had to pay for a dime of your own life so far. The British taxpayers have paid for everything".*

PM: *"Exactly".*

MK: *"And now you might have to pay for some security –"*

SR: *"Alright but Megyn –"*

PM: *"Even the refurbishment –"*

SR: *"OK, Megyn –"*

PM: *"Even the two and half million pound refurbishment of Frogmore Cottage was paid for by us. They eventually paid it back from their Netflix gazillions".*

SR: *"But they mention in their interview that they were subject to death threats. And we know that even if they, if Prince Harry took a step away from the Royal Family, by dint of his birth he is always going to be a target –"*

PM: *"So hire your own security. If you're not going to do royal duty –"*

SR: *"And he's going to be at risk. Why wouldn't you expect –"*

PM: *"If you're not going to do the royal duty. Sorry".*

SR: *"Because you don't change your birth when you step away from the Royal Family".*

PM: *"If you're going to be commercial people, pay for it out of your own pocket".*

SR: *"Megyn, is it not reasonable for them to expect to continue to be protected? Because I think of lot of people will think it is".*

PM: *"Really? When they're earning a hundred million from Netflix?"*

MK: *"I wouldn't presume to speak for the, for the palace, right, and how the rules are. But I think as a grown adult you know what the rules are. And when you are a multi-millionaire with all that dough in your pocket, you've never had to pay for anything your entire life, you can shell out a few dollars to protect your child if you're that worried about it. A lot of people have had death threats. I'm sorry to say it's a faction of modern life, if you are a famous person, and they're going to have to deal with this. And so far they seem to be very well ensconced in a very safe place here in California. But if you want your liberty, then you're going to have to pay for it. That's the way life works".*

PM: *"It's really, it's not a difficult thing to work out".*

SR: *"I think it's so unsympathetic to a couple who were clearly at risk. All they were asking for was to be protected".*

- PM: *"Oh please. You're buying into their ludicrously self-serving narrative, Susanna, I'm sorry. They were told when they finally made their big –"*
- SR: *"Well you can describe it as ludicrously self-serving or you can have some sympathy for them".*
- PM: *"When they finally made their 'we're leaving Britain, we're leaving the Royal Family, we won't do any more duty'. And they said 'OK, well, in that case, I'm afraid the paid security that comes with the job of doing royal duty, that I'm afraid goes with the job'. And at that point they throw their toys out of the pram".*
- MK: *"So can I just say this? Here's the other thing that really irritated me about the whole thing. I understand they had problems. If there is a racist in the Royal Family saying stuff like that about their child, it's deeply upsetting. I get it. But nowhere in there did I hear any acknowledgement of the enormous privilege they have, right. Some perspective saying, 'Look, it wasn't a great experience. We chose to leave. That wasn't the way, that wasn't the way we wanted to live our lives. But we understand there is so much suffering in the world. We've seen it first-hand this past year in both of our countries, and we're good. We're grateful for the blessings we have. We're not here to complain. Love our families, they're the reason we have all these things –"*
- PM: *"She compared, Meghan Markle actually compared being trapped inside the palace as to what people are going through in pandemic lockdown. She literally wanted people who are living on tower blocks in estates with four kids, home schooling, she wanted them to know 'I know what that feeling's like, I've been in a palace with a bunch of servants'".*
- MK: *"She was very lonely in her palace, and then she compared herself to the Little Mermaid. The Little Mermaid who married a Prince and lost her voice. It's like 'So it wasn't predictable at all to you that when you moved into the palace, someone else was going to control the press?' My six-year-old daughter knew that before I went off to cover the Royal wedding. Everyone knew that, and this –"*
- SR: *"But Megyn, if you felt that somebody that you were working for was lying about you, or mistreating you, isn't it reasonable to say that you felt unprotected and that you felt abandoned and that you, you know, when she says that all she wanted to do was go out and have lunch with friends. She hadn't been out for four months properly".*
- PM: *"She literally flew to New York for a \$500,000 baby shower and flew back on the Clooney jet and she can't have lunch with friends".*
- SR: *"I don't know how anyone can be prepared –"*

PM: *"Do me a favour".*

SR: *"– for what it is like to be in that institution".*

PM: *"She was having lunch with her friends in New York".*

MK: *"No, OK, so listen. You guys know as well as I do. Look, the press was vicious toward her, I get it, after they were lovely toward her. The press can turn –"*

PM: *"Well, Megyn, Megyn, hang on, hang on –"*

SR: *"I'm glad that you acknowledge that".*

PM: *"Before you finish that sentence, let me again just remind people of all the front pages of the terrible British press –"*

SR: *"Around the wedding".*

PM: *"– around their engagement and then their wedding later".*

SR: *"Yes".*

Newspaper front pages were shown on screen.

PM: *"Unified, absolute ecstasy about the fact that Harry was marrying a bi-racial woman. Unified. Not a word, not a word of dissent. This is what the British press actually published, not what's in their minds or what they read on social media. That is the truth".*

SR: *"But she said there was a change in the tone".*

PM: *"That's my truth. They've had their truth. That's my truth".*

MK: *"That's why I don't think you can say it's about race, because if it was about race they would have been brutal to her from the start. And they were over the top in love with her and then her behaviour changed and their coverage changed. But look, this isn't all the fault of the Royal Family. She became a royal. She married a Prince. The press is going to cover you. I mean, even in my much lower station in life as a news anchor, the press is brutal. You get punched in the face rhetorically all the time and it's awful and it's a fact of life you have to learn to deal with. It doesn't, it shouldn't drive you to that kind of depression, those kinds of self-lamentations. And the fact that she became suicidal over the fact that the press was nasty, she was stuck in a castle and there might have been a racist in the Royal Family is truly shocking. It's truly shocking".*

PM: *"We don't know any names".*

- SR: *"Well it's upsetting".*
- PM: *"She says she went to the palace about her mental health and got rejected. Who was that person at the palace that rejected her and what was her husband doing about all this? She says, Harry says there was a racist in the family spewing racist stuff about his baby. Who was that racist? You can't just spray gun people anonymously and then smear them all. Megyn, you've been brilliant as always. Thank you for your contribution. Always good to have you on the programme. Thank you very much".*
- SR: *"And Oprah with Meghan and Harry airs tonight on ITV at 9pm".*
- PM: *"Trust me, you're going to want to watch it because it's the most explosive real-life episode of The Crown you will ever watch. Still ahead on Good Morning Britain, we've got loads of big guests coming up. This will be raging all morning, so stay with us".*

After the local news and an advert break, the presenters discussed the issues around race raised in the interview, with a panel of guests. These guests were author and women's rights activist, Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu (SM), journalist, Mr Kevin Maguire (KM), journalist, Mr Andrew Pierce (AP) and Victoria Cross recipient, Colour Sergeant Johnson Beharry (JB):

- SR: *"Well, there's plenty to talk about and the front pages are up to date. The Daily Mail reports on the Duchess of Sussex's claim that a member of the Royal Family asked Harry how dark the skin of their unborn child would be. Meghan and Harry's revealing interview aired in the US overnight and will be on ITV tonight at 9pm".*
- PM: *"The Sun reports on Meghan Markle's revelation she was on the verge of suicide just before she left the UK with Harry and Archie".*
- SR: *"The Express reports that Meghan made the Duchess of Cambridge cry were false and in fact, the reverse happened".*
- PM: *"She claims, she claims the reverse is the case. We're joined by the Mirror's Kevin Maguire, by the Mail's Andrew Pierce, by the author and women's rights activist Dr Shola Mos-Shogbamimu and a friend of Prince Harry and Victoria Cross hero Sergeant Johnson Beharry. Alright, Shola, um, you've been waiting patiently. Your reaction to that interview?"*
- SM: *"Let me give my reaction to you Piers, OK. I just, every rant you've just given in the last hour, it's honestly, you're such a liar and a disgrace".*
- PM: *"Yeah, you're about to do the same thing".*
- SM: *"You conveniently bring up –"*

PM: *"I'm giving you the platform –"*

SM: *"– let me finish and don't interrupt me".*

PM: *"– you talk about the interview".*

SM: *"You conveniently bring out media coverage –"*

PM: *"You trash me every time you come on".*

SM: *"Let me finish".*

PM: *"You trash me every time you come on –"*

SM: *"Let me finish".*

PM: *"– which is exactly the thing you accused me of doing".*

SM: *"Let me finish".*

PM: *"You've got something to say about the interview? Say it".*

SM: *"Let me finish. You bring out coverage about Meghan and Harry on their wedding day and the engagement, but conveniently forget to show the coverage before they got engaged, between the engagement and the marriage. I'm sorry, you conveniently forget that Prince Harry, November 2016, talked about the racist undertones of the media. You conveniently forget all of that to paint this picture that all was rosy and hunky dory. Nonsense. And then you were lording over the Queen. Listen, by all means, let's applaud the Queen when she does something right. But when she does something wrong, we need to call her out".*

PM: *"What did she do wrong?"*

SM: *"What kind of grandmother –"*

PM: *"What did she do wrong?"*

SM: *"What kind of grandmother, let me finish, what kind of grandmother would be so close to her, to her grandson Harry, but then not use her power and influence as Queen to protect them from the racist media coverage? What kind of grandmother will protect her own son, Prince Andrew, from the potential crime of raping a minor, but will do jack all to protect Harry and Meghan? Especially, I have no doubt that she would have heard about the suicidal thoughts and the help and support she needs. And then you sit there, hammering on about how the Royal institution is not racist. Are you out of your God forsaken mind?"*

PM: *"No, you know what, I find what you're saying about the Queen actually disgraceful. I find what you're saying –"*

SM: *"The Royal Family, let me finish, let me finish –"*

PM: *"– you're entitled to your opinion Shola. I find, sorry no, I'm allowed to respond to what you've just said".*

SM: *"The Royal Family as an institution is rooted, listen, you might learn something. The Royal Family as an institution is rooted in colonialism, white supremacy and racism. The legacy is right there. So, you are now surprised that a comment would have been made by several members of the Royal Family about how dark Archie's skin is?"*

PM: *"It's not several members, actually –"*

SM: *"I am shocked that you are more outraged –"*

PM: *"– no, no, you can't spew lies".*

SM: *"– you are more outraged that Harry and Meghan talked about than the actual –"*

PM: *"Alright, are we allowed to engage in any of this?"*

SM: *"Let me finish".*

PM: *"Well you're not stopping".*

SM: *"You are more outraged that Harry and Meghan had the audacity to speak their truth than you should be at the actual outrage of racism".*

PM: *"Right, OK, am I allowed to respond to this?"*

SM: *"It makes no sense".*

PM: *"Am I allowed to respond yet?"*

SM: *"You can respond now".*

PM: *"OK, I think what you just said about the Queen is disgusting. I think it's unbelievable –"*

SM: *"You are disgusting".*

PM: *"– you talk about –"*

SM: *"You are disgusting".*

PM: *"– you talk about, you talk about the behaviour of a ninety –"*

SM: *"Am I lying in what I said there? You tell me –"*

PM: *"– allow me to say what I'm, allow me to explain".*

SM: *"– am I lying when I said that the Queen and the institution has protected Prince Andrew but did nothing to protect Meghan and Harry?"*

PM: *"Allow me to, allow me to defend our Royal Family, thank you".*

SM: *"You tell me".*

PM: *"If you stop shouting, I'll answer you. Are you going to stop shouting?"*

SM: *"After you stop shouting".*

PM: *"Yeah, let me tell you why I think what you said was disgusting. The Queen is 94 years old, right?"*

SM: *"So what?"*

PM: *"Her husband, her husband is 99, is lying in hospital –"*

SM: *"So what?"*

PM: *"– for the fourth week seriously ill. You say, you talk about, you talk about how –"*

SM: *"We understand that –"*

PM: *"Please, let me, let me speak Shola".*

SR: *"Everybody, come on, let's please stay calm".*

PM: *"OK, whenever you're finished, whenever you're finished".*

SM: *"– and we can wish Prince Philip a speedy recovery, but the reality is you cannot deny –"*

PM: *"Shola, I'd like to finish my sentence please".*

SM: *"– any actions, any omissions or conduct that that family has done –"*

PM: *"I would like to finish my sentence".*

SM: *"– the Royal Family has done; they have perpetrated racism. You don't cover it up simply because the Queen –"*

PM: *"OK, can I please finish my sentence?"*

SM: *"– you have to be able to call her out when she's done something wrong".*

PM: *"OK, I'm going to finish my sentence now, if you'll stop shouting at me. Here's the finish of my sentence. You –"*

SM: *"You were shouting too".*

SR: *"Guys".*

PM: *"You talk about the behaviour of a 94-year-old monarch, and you say that she should have done more. What about the behaviour of Harry and Meghan who are spray gunning his family on global television as Philip lies in hospital? You might laugh, I don't think it's funny. I think it's piling hurt –"*

SM: *"No, no, what I don't think is funny, Piers Morgan –"*

PM: *"– hurt on the Queen who is already suffering greatly from her husband's illness".*

SM: *"– what I don't think is funny, so I'm going to respond to that. What I don't think is funny, I'll tell you what I don't think is funny, is the fact that you are such a disappointment. I wish to God one day you would even surprise me. You constant, you constantly use your platform as a wealthy White privileged man with power to influence, to aggravate –"*

PM: *"Oh, what a load of nonsense, honestly. What a load of race baiting nonsense".*

SM: *"– the bigoted, sexist, racist and the misogynist attacks on Meghan Markle –"*

PM: *"What a load of race baiting nonsense".*

SM: *"– and you do it so shamelessly".*

PM: *"We have done more –"*

SM: *"That's the point. So, the Queen is 94, Philip is 99 –"*

PM: *"– we have done more on racial issues on this show than any other show on television".*

SM: *"– so that means you can't call out anything that they've done that is wrong?"*

PM: *"You're talking, Shola, you can keep shouting".*

SM: *"You want to deny that the Royal Family has any racist undertone or actions against the first biracial person simply because you're in love with the Queen? You can love the Queen –"*

PM: *"No, I think, I think what you're doing now, OK".*

SM: *"You can love the Queen, but you should be able to call out actions done by the Royal Family when they've got it wrong. That's the point".*

PM: *"Yeah, I'm not going to let you trash the Queen, sorry, just not going to let you do it".*

SM: *"Trash the Queen? Well I'm not going to allow you –"*

PM: *"I'm not going to let you do it, but you've had your say".*

SM: *"– to perpetuate racism, I am not going to allow you to perpetuate racism".*

PM: *"Let's bring in Johnson Beharry now. I presume you'll let Johnson Beharry talk, will you? He won the Victoria Cross for serving his country. Maybe give him time to speak now. Johnson, welcome to the programme".*

JB: *"Thank you".*

PM: *"As you can see, temperatures are running high about this. You won the Victoria Cross serving this country. You're a Black man. Is this country racist? You know the Royal Family well; you've met many of them. Is the Royal Family racist?"*

JB: *"I could only speak from my experience. I, personally, my time... visiting the Royal Family, visiting Buckingham Palace, charity engagement with Prince Harry and other members of the Royal Family, and the way I have been treated up to date by the general public in Britain, I could never say that".*

PM: *"So, when you hear that, you know, you hear Meghan Markle in particular characterised the Royal Family as a racist institution, what is your reaction to that?"*

JB: *"My personal reaction is I don't believe it because I never experienced it. I went to the Palace on numerous occasions where the, the, the audience is quite diverse. Everyone is happy and, you know, having a good time and the Royal Family, yeah, I mean for me personally, I've never seen it. Never experienced it".*

SR: *"OK, Johnson and it's good to hear your perspective, but you would also acknowledge that if somebody who had come into the Royal Family had an experience that she felt, either with the press had tones of racism, or the way that her son or her children were being spoken about had tones of racism, you would want those allegations to be taken seriously, would you not?"*

JB: *"Well, that's, in any, any walks of life, anything like that, it should be dealt with. But I don't think it should be dealt with in the public".*

SR: *“Should we have a listen to that part of the interview? Because it clearly is, from our discussions, the most incendiary part of the interview. Let’s have a listen”.*

The following clips from the interview, edited together, were then played:

DS: *“And also concerns and conversations about how dark his skin might be when he’s born”.*

OW: *“What?”*

DS: *“– several conversations about it”.*

OW: *“There’s a conversation with you –”*

DS: *“With Harry”.*

OW: *“– about how dark your baby is going to be?”*

DS: *“Potentially, and what that would mean or look like”.*

OW: *“Ooh”.*

OW: *“What was that conversation?”*

PH: *“That conversation I’m never going to share. Um, but at the time, at the time it was awkward, I was a bit shocked. Um –”*

OW: *“Can you tell us what the question was?”*

PH: *“No. I’m not comfortable sharing that”.*

The presenters and panel of guests then continued to discuss the interview:

SR: *“Johnson, it feels like we need to know more about that conversation and what happened”.*

JB: *“Um, me, again, I don’t, I don’t believe that happened. If it happened and they, they feel free to talk about it, like, or just bring up the topic. Why then, they don’t explain it? Well, who said it? Where did it happen? I don’t believe it, personally –”*

PM: *“And also what was the context? We don’t know the context. There are many families in this country who are bi-racial, where one parent’s White, one parent’s Black. You don’t think that those families have honest, sincere discussions about, you know, what colour the babies may be? Of course those conversations happen. The context is so important here. Was it racially motivated? Was there a slur against Harry about the potential skin colour of his child? And if that is true, then who said such a racist thing? Because if it was someone who may be, for argument’s sake, a future King of this country, I want to know. I*

want to know the name of that person. Let's bring in Kevin Maguire. Kevin, this is, was, I mean, by far the most incendiary royal interview we've seen. We'll park Andrew to one side because we've all made our views very clear about Andrew repeatedly in the last two years. He absolutely should be interviewed by the FBI under oath about what he knew about the billionaire paedophile Jeffrey Epstein, and the longer he doesn't, frankly, the more it stinks. And yes, I think he was afforded protection by the Royal Family, and that is also shameful. But let's talk about Meghan and Harry and this interview and what it achieves and the damage I think it is doing. Incalculable damage right now around the world, and particularly in America, to the brand of the monarchy and the image of the monarchy, which of course, is led by the Queen".

KM: "Yeah, well it's got to be a reckoning now because you listen to Meghan Markle and Harry Windsor there. They sounded like survivors of a weird royal cult who got out and were having therapy with, with Oprah Winfrey. And yes, we've got to know more. Who asked him about the skin colour of his child? Was it his brother? Was it his dad? Was it his grandfather? Was it an uncle? Was it an aunt? Who was it and what was that context? Because that is hugely damaging. You've got to remember that Meghan and Harry were the future faces of the Royal Family. They were gold dust. They were adored, huge crowds, everybody cheered them and it's gone horribly, horribly wrong on both sides. Why has this happened? What does it tell us? One, about the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, they still like to use that, those titles because they, they get the money from it, let's be honest about it. And then, secondly, what does it say in modern Britain about the apex of the upper class, the hereditary monarchy, this family that sits at the top? And it is there and we pay for it because it is supposed to serve the public. Now, can it serve the whole country if, if it's racist? No it can't. So we've got to have a day of –"

PM: "Well, let's bring in Andrew. Andrew, let's talk also about, let's talk about some of the other revelations here. It wasn't –"

KM: "– this is the biggest crisis facing the Royal Family, much bigger than Diana now because it's under, it's under assault from two different –"

PM: "I agree, I think the damage is incalculable. Andrew, let's talk about some of the other stuff that appeared in this interview which under normal circumstances would be a huge story. She turns on Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, says that Kate made her cry over the infamous flower girl thing. Let's watch this".

The following clip from the interview was then played:

OW: "Did you make Kate cry?"

DS: *"No".*

OW: *"So where did that come from? Was there a situation where she might have cried or she could have cried?"*

DS: *"No, no, the reverse happened".*

The presenters and the panel then continued to discuss the interview, as follows:

PM: *"Now, we don't know the truth about that. Other than, my understanding from my sources, is that actually Kate was very upset by that whole thing herself, so it depends who you want to believe here. But Andrew, it goes on, she spray guns everybody, but it's all Harry's family. Nothing about her own dysfunctional family".*

AP: *"Well, and I was astonished to Oprah Winfrey, who's meant to be this formidably, a brilliant journalist, never ever asked her why she doesn't speak to her father, she doesn't speak to any of her own siblings. None of them were at the wedding except her mother, and she allowed her to make these unsubstantiated allegations without pinning them down. And as for the Royal Family, the Queen being a racist. Can we just remind people, today is Commonwealth Day. The Queen is head of the Commonwealth. That's 52, 53 countries, predominantly Black African, Black Caribbean. She's a huge champion of the Commonwealth. You wouldn't be a huge champion of the Commonwealth... out and out racist. And her husband, by the way, Prince Philip, has been an enthusiastic supporter of the Caribbean too, as has Prince Charles. And there was a very moving TV programme on the BBC last night about their support for the Commonwealth. So, I find it very difficult to think that the Queen is a racist".*

SR: *"OK, Kevin, there is an alternative perspective here, which is that Meghan and Harry have got out and they have blown the lid on an institution that is stifling, controlling, has elements of racism in it, lies to protect certain people and not to protect other people, has a contract of fear with the press, which means that the Royal Family will not step in when there is unpleasant coverage. I mean, you know, there is a split here between how people are reacting to this interview. You either think it's a disgusting slur on the Royal Family or you think that the Royal Family and the press have questions, serious questions to answer".*

KM: *"Yeah, Susanna, it's very polarizing, undoubtedly. And many people had a view, were going to look at this interview with preconceived positions, me included. You watch it and I think it's worse than I thought it would be for Buckingham Palace, they must realise that now. This is worse than they were braced for. And yeah, there are questions for us in the media too, I don't deny that. And, look, Meghan Markle could both be a*

very ruthless social climber and incredibly pushy and a victim of race and racism... The two are not mutually exclusive. Both could happen, but she's clearly had an absolutely terrible, terrible time. And if, as she says, she's having suicidal thoughts, she's struggling with her mental health and she is denied help because it might look bad, what does that say about this, this, this family which looks cold and aloof and very uncaring? And Prince Charles not taking his son's calls at one time? Come on, any parent –"

SR: *"Andrew, sorry, Andrew –"*

PM: *"Let me tell you, Prince Charles, Prince Charles has been bankrolling that, that couple for the last five years. Millions and millions and millions of pounds of Charles' money has gone to propping them up and he only took it away when they quit the Royal Family, quit royal duty, quit this country and went and lived in America. And good luck to them, they can do that if they want to. But they still want to use their royal titles to make their gazillions with Netflix and Spotify and the rest of it. But let's not forget the father he's trashing on national television bankrolled him. That same father".*

SR: *"But he accused Prince Charles of refusing to take his calls. Dr Shola".*

SM: *"Sorry, what did you say, Susanna?"*

SR: *"Sorry, you were just about to say something, I was".*

SM: *"Yeah, I was just trying to explain that if, if Prince Charles has done something wrong, Harry should be able to say 'This is what is happening'. And, you know, Piers and others who, and not just those on this panel, I'm talking about those on Twitter and everywhere else, who just want to paint them out as this money-grabbing, self-entitled, you know, that all they are doing is complaining. Clearly, you're not listening. Now, there are going to be many White people who will watch this interview and come away with 'That wasn't racist'. The fact that someone in the Royal Family or there were conversations in the Royal Family about the colour or tone of Archie's skin. Listening to Piers saying 'Oh, that should be normal'. This is exactly how racism is normalised in the United Kingdom".*

PM: *"No, no, no. Don't you misquote me. Don't you misquote me. No, no. I'm sorry –"*

SM: *"This is exactly how racism is normalised in the United Kingdom –"*

PM: *"– don't you start race baiting again with me. No –"*

SM: *"– and what I'm also saying is this –"*

PM: *"– no, Shola, you won't get away with that".*

SM: *"Let me finish and then you can talk. What I'm saying is the Queen is not above reproach. She's neither, you know, faultless or perfect. So when she does something right, applaud her for it. But if there's something suspect, we need to call her, call her and members of the Royal Family out".*

PM: *"You've got no idea about the Queen. You've no idea what the Queen did and, from my point of view, I simply raised the point. We don't know the context of this supposed racism –"*

SM: *"But that's not what you're saying, Piers".*

PM: *"– about the skin colour of Archie".*

SM: *"But that's not what you're doing".*

PM: *"We don't know the context".*

SM: *"But Piers, that's not what you're saying, that's not true".*

PM: *"That's exactly what I said".*

SM: *"You say there's no context, but you immediately sweep away everything they said, their whole experience as rubbish, as BS, because the Royal Family is not racist according to you, because Meghan and Harry cannot be telling the truth simply because you don't like them".*

PM: *"No, you're entitled, you're entitled –"*

SR: *"But Dr Shola, to be fair, on this programme, we are discussing all aspects and all opinions".*

PM: *"And you're entitled to your view, Shola, and I'm entitled to mine".*

SM: *"I'm just telling, I'm just correcting Piers –"*

PM: *"Yeah, you're not correcting me. You're giving your opinion".*

SM: *"– and saying that Piers has said 'no context', but at the same time, he's swept everything else under the carpet under the guise of 'I don't believe them'".*

PM: *"Right, you, let's bring in Johnson Beharry. Johnson, your reaction?"*

JB: *"I mean, there is one side of the story here. We've only seen one side of the story. And they make the decision, they didn't want to be part of the Royal Family anymore. They wanted to be independent, so be independent".*

SM: *"We've seen both sides of the story".*

JB: *"But the fact of wanting, wanting the cake and eat it, you cannot have both, and to be honest –"*

PM: *"Exactly".*

SM: *"I'm sorry, you're wrong".*

SR: *"OK, alright. We have to –"*

PM: *"You're wrong, apparently, they can have their cake and eat it".*

SM: *"You're wrong, we've seen both sides of the story".*

PM: *"That just about sums it up".*

SM: *"For years, we saw the side of the Royal Family. Today or yesterday was the first time that Harry and Meghan shared their story so, people, please, stop talking like you do not know".*

PM: *"Yeah, why did they share their story if they are so private, Shola?"*

SR: *"Well, they didn't want 100% privacy –"*

SM: *"It's not about being so private –"*

PM: *"People who are so private spewing their family dirty laundry all over global TV".*

SM: *"– you know what, this interview has happened, Piers. This interview has happened".*

SR: *"They don't want 100% privacy. Before we let, hang on, OK –"*

SM: *"If this interview did not happen, people like you, Piers, will continue to backlash, continue to lie about them, continue to put out untruths and misinformation".*

PM: *"I don't lie about those two, I see right through them".*

SM: *"Yes, you do, Piers, you lie about Meghan every single day –"*

PM: *"No, no, I see right through them. And you come out and you defend the indefensible and that's your position".*

SM: *"– because she ghosted you and did not want to be your friend".*

PM: *"I don't lie about them, I see right through them, and what they did on national TV –"*

SM: *"Yes, you do".*

SR: *"I think we've all got a perspective on that".*

PM: *"– in the last few hours was a disgrace. But anyway, we'll leave it there".*

SM: *"No, you are a disgrace".*

SR: *"OK, Dr Shola, Johnson Beharry, Andrew, Kevin, thanks very much indeed".*

PM: *"– Shola, and the way you trashed the Queen, by the way, was a disgrace".*

SM: *"You're a disgrace".*

SR: *"OK. Blimey".*

PM: *"Lots more still ahead. As you can see, it's going to be calm morning. You're watching Good Morning Britain on ITV".*

SR: *"No one is faultless, and no one is perfect".*

PM: *"I'm perfect".*

SR: *"No, you're not".*

At 07:56, the presenters again discussed the interview with Royal Editor, Mr Ship:

PM: *"Well, we're still talking about, obviously, this interview. Full of revelations about the Royal Family from that very private couple, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. Chris, I want to talk in particular –"*

SR: *"When you say private, they want just to have a little bit more privacy –"*

PM: *"Oh please Susanna, they've just spray gunned their entire –"*

SR: *"– and a little bit more of their own voice being heard and I don't blame them, frankly".*

PM: *"– Harry's family's just been spray gunned for two hours on global TV. They don't want privacy, they want to be able to attack anyone they like with nobody coming back at them".*

SR: *"They feel they've been attacked".*

PM: *"Oh please".*

SR: *"They feel they've been lied about. They feel they've been controlled –"*

PM: *"You don't even believe this stuff as you're saying it".*

SR: *"– and they, and they feel like they've been trapped".*

PM: *"OK, let's move to Prince Charles. Chris Ship is still with us. Chris, there was a moment where Harry revealed that Charles stopped taking his calls. Let's have a listen to it".*

A clip of the Duke of Sussex talking to Ms Winfrey was then shown:

PH: *"When we were in Canada, I, I had three conversations with my grandmother and two conversations with my father, before he stopped taking my calls".*

OW: *"Your dad stopped taking your calls. Why did he stop taking your calls?"*

PH: *"Because, I took matters in, by that point, I took matters into my own hands. It was like 'I need to do this for my family. This is not a surprise to anybody. It's really sad that it's got to this point, but I've got to do something for my own mental health, for my wife's".*

The presenters and Mr Ship then continued:

PM: *"So Chris, um, he, Charles stopped taking his calls".*

CS: *"Well, listen, this, this is the accusation that Harry blindsided the Queen. So, we'll, let's take you back to January of last year, was it, when they announced that they were leaving. OK, and the accusation was the Queen knew nothing about it and his father knew nothing about it. Now, what I thought was quite interesting, we spoke a lot about what Meghan said and I still believe, you don't, that we should take this, this suicide thing very, very seriously. Indeed, the racism comes down to whether or not –"*

SR: *"We, absolutely that has to be taken seriously".*

CS: *"– you believe one side or another side. But actually, what he's saying here is actually 'I had two conversations with my father. I had three conversations with the Queen about our plans to want to leave', so –"*

SR: *"There was no blindsiding".*

CS: *"– when everyone was writing afterwards that the Queen was blindsided by this. What they're saying is 'absolutely not, and I, actually, then Prince Charles stopped taking my calls', and he said 'he asked me for it all in writing'. And then he goes on to make other accusations about his family are scared of the press –"*

SR: *"Chris, can I just intervene, because, can I intervene, because this is, this goes to the heart of the coverage that they're complaining about".*

CS: *"Exactly, yeah, yeah".*

SR: *"So he says they had conversations, five conversations in all, with his grandmother and with his father. And that it was Prince Charles –"*

CS: *"And he wanted it in writing".*

SR: *"– who stopped the conversations on the telephone".*

CS: *"Yep, yes".*

SR: *"How was it reported at the time?"*

CS: *"At the time it was reported, and I distinctly remember getting a phone call about this, that the Queen was surprised by this –"*

SR: *"Right".*

CS: *"– and hence all the headlines the Queen was blindsided. Now, if she's had three conversations with Prince Harry about it and Prince Charles has had two conversations with Prince Harry about it and then he was asked for it in writing, it rather suggests that nobody was blindsided –"*

PM: *"Well, says Prince Harry".*

CS: *"– this, OK, OK, this says Prince Harry".*

PM: *"Says Prince Harry. I mean, we don't even know what the contents of those calls were".*

CS: *"Absolutely, says Prince Harry. But also, he makes a point about his, both his father and his brother. They said 'They are trapped in the Royal Family. They don't get to leave. I have huge compassion'".*

PM: *"So disloyal. It's so disloyal".*

SR: *"Well, except he says he has compassion for them".*

PM: *"Oh, please, they can't spell the word compassion".*

SR: *"He's saying, he is saying that he thinks –"*

PM: *"What's compassionate about spray gunning the Royal Family as Prince Philip lies in hospital?"*

SR: *"– that that's not an enviable situation to be in".*

PM: *"Where's the compassion for the Queen and Prince Philip right now? Zero".*

SR: *"Why can't you take you anything that they're saying seriously?"*

PM: *"Zero. Because they have no compassion, these two –"*

SR: *"Why can't you understand that –"*

PM: *"– other than for themselves".*

SR: *"– perhaps a couple find it difficult to be in this institution".*

PM: *"All they care about is their own misery and woe in their \$11 million mansion in California".*

SR: *"If you're experiencing misery and woe, you definitely would be concerned about it".*

PM: *"They don't know how to spell the word compassion. They've trashed his dad. They've trashed his brother. They've trashed his sister-in-law. They've trashed everything the Queen has worked so hard to maintain with the monarchy. And we've supposed to believe they're compassionate? Do me a favour".*

SR: *"They felt they were trashed. They felt they were lied about. She said that she was driven to the verge of taking her own life".*

PM: *"She says that, yeah".*

SR: *"They have absolutely obviously awful experiences –"*

PM: *"And members of her female staff at the Palace said they were bullied by Meghan. And when those allegations were made, her team came back and said it was outrageous, dismissed it, didn't take them seriously at all, but we're supposed to take everything she says as absolute gospel, no?"*

SR: *"No, we have to take it all seriously".*

PM: *"And we're supposed to give that respect. She showed no respect for the alleged bullying victims that she apparently traumatized, and I've had one account on one of them. I can tell you, if they start talking, we're going to hear a very different story about the Duke and Duchess of Compassion".*

SR: *"Yeah, is it not –"*

PM: *"But we're not allowed to hear their stories because they've been dismissed out of hand".*

SR: *"No".*

PM: *"By Meghan and Harry".*

SR: *"We have reported on those allegations –"*

PM: *"Those bully victims, their stories don't count. Only their truth counts. It is honestly –"*

SR: *"We have reported on those allegations. We take them very seriously and there is an investigation now launching into them".*

PM: *"OK, Chris, you've got a busy day ahead of you, very busy day ahead of you. You've had about an hour sleep. We greatly appreciate you staying with us. Just finally, what is the reaction from the Palace today?"*

CS: *"They've got a really difficult job today. I mean, I said a few weeks ago when we first revealed that this was happening, this had the potential to be very uncomfortable for the country in general and for the Royal Family in particular. Uncomfortable does not begin to describe the allegations that were made in that two-hour interview last night".*

PM: *"No".*

SR: *"Painful".*

CS: *"They've got a huge job".*

PM: *"The unsubstantiated allegations and the most serious ones with no names attached to them, which I think is cowardly".*

SR: *"The Royal Family –"*

PM: *"If you make allegations like this, give us the names. You gave, you spray gunned everybody else by name. So, give us the names about the racist. Give us the name about who you went to about your mental health, who rejected you out of hand and said you weren't entitled to any help. We need to know who these people were. No good to hide under the cloak of anonymity –"*

SR: *"The Palace –"*

PM: *"– so we look at all of them in the same callous, racist way".*

SR: *"The Palace and the family normally never complain, never explain. I'm afraid they're not going to be in a position with these two to be able to do that".*

PM: *"Whereas these two have never stopped complaining from the moment –"*

CS: *"They've got very little choice".*

PM: *"– from the moment they got married".*

CS: *"It was unusual last week when they commented on the bullying allegations. That was pretty unusual. I can't see how they wouldn't, they couldn't respond somehow today. They've got to. I mean, we've already spoken about the, the mood in America and how the view is going to be formed over there. This is potentially very damaging. They've got to –"*

PM: *"America is trashing our country and trashing our monarchy now. I've been watching social media with a number of high-profile people coming out, using this as the excuse to trash this country. What was Prince Harry thinking? I know you ditched your country, Harry. You ditched us and now you want to turn the world against us and our Royal Family? The thing that your, your grandmother has worked so on for six decades. You want to just dismiss all that?"*

SR: *"It is definitely a very painful interview".*

PM: *"Disgraceful".*

PM: *"Also, one bombshell that's been lost in all the midst –"*

SR: *"Well, Richard mentioned it, didn't he, Richard Gaisford just mentioned this in the headlines".*

PM: *"Yep".*

SR: *"The fact that the couple revealed that their huge multi-million-pound wedding –"*

PM: *"30 million quid, it cost".*

SR: *"– was actually not their marriage. Let's have a look".*

A clip from the interview was then shown:

DS: *"Three days before our wedding, we got married. No one knows that, but we called the Archbishop and we just said 'Look this thing, this spectacle is for the world but we want our union between us'. So, like, the vows that we have framed in our room are just the two of us in our backyard with the Archbishop of Canterbury and, and that was the piece that –"*

PH: *"Just the three of us. Just the three of us".*

DS: *"Just the three of us".*

The presenters then continued in the studio:

PM: *"Just the little old us in the back of our garden with the Archbishop of Canterbury"*.

SR: *"Well, Chris, do they leave themselves open to accusations that the big wedding was a lie?"*

PM: *"Sorry, I didn't even know you could do it twice in three days"*.

CS: *"I mean –"*

PM: *"So the vows they exchanged on national TV –"*

SR: *"We'll get to Chris in a minute".*

PM: *"– were not real vows, right? Is that what we, so everything we saw was a sham?"*

SR: *"Was it?"*

PM: *"And by the way, who has the Archbishop of Canterbury in their garden to get married and then claims to be people of the people?"*

SR: *"Well, the Archbishop of Canterbury was there twice".*

CS: *"Well, yes. I mean, they called up the Archbishop of Canterbury and they had two weddings. So what I tried to find out before I came on here and I haven't had a chance to do since is, well, which one was the real wedding?"*

PM: *"Right?"*

CS: *"One that we all watched in Windsor or the one that they had three days before?"*

PM: *"Well, the Archbishop of Canterbury wouldn't have officiated on a fake wedding".*

CS: *"Yeah".*

PM: *"So presumably he did the real wedding and we got sold the scam for 30 million quid".*

CS: *"You know and also, last night, when they're having chat over chickens, I missed that actual bit so I didn't actually find out that news until about an hour after it all ended, but".*

PM: *"Lovely chickens though, aren't they? I wonder if they eat them".*

SR: *"No, they're rescue chickens. They're not eating them".*

PM: *"They're eating their eggs. Cruel".*

- SR: *"They're not vegans –"*
- PM: *"Bet they eat their eggs".*
- SR: *"– so there's nothing cruel about it, in their view".*
- PM: *"Not if you're a vegan, very cruel".*
- SR: *"They're not vegan".*
- PM: *"Won't play well with the vegan community in Santa Barbara, will it?"*
- SR: *"Look, look, you can accuse them all sorts of things –"*
- PM: *"Anyway, we've got to let Chris Ship go, but –"*
- SR: *"– but not cruelty to chickens".*
- PM: *"– the multiple weddings that the Duke and Duchess of Sussex appear to have had. One of them completely in secret, with the Archbishop of Canterbury in their back garden. We should be discussing that, shouldn't we? As well as everything else. Bombshell after bombshell from this privacy, privacy-driven couple. The publicity-shy Duke and Duchess of Sussex".*
- SR: *"They've never said they're publicity-shy, they just do not want the lies told about them".*
- PM: *"Just don't want any negative publicity at all. As long as it's positive and we're all showering them with praise, that's fine. Anyway, lockdown is having a disproportionate impact on girls and many young women taking on extra household chores like cooking and cleaning, leaving them less time to focus on their school work".*
- SR: *"That is the finding of the charity which was set up by Sarah Brown, the wife of the former Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Sarah joins us now".*

The presenters then went on to discuss the interview with Ms Sarah Brown (SB), campaigner for global health and education and the wife of former prime minister Mr Gordon Brown:

- PM: *"Sarah, you're a calming voice –"*
- SR: *"We need you, we need you".*
- PM: *"– in many a storm over the years. I've known you 30 years and you've always been a, sort of, face and voice of serenity. So calm everybody down with a logical, calm, rational response. I know you haven't seen the interview, but you'll have seen all the headlines and heard the debate raging. What's your view of it?"*

SB: *“Oh, Susanna and Piers, thanks for making time for me today on International Women’s Day, so maybe we’ll talk about a little bit more than the interview. I haven’t seen it, but just seeing the reports and, and listening in on some of your discussions this morning, I can see that at no moment is the Queen, you know, behaviour or ways of treating them been called into question at all. So, as ever, she remains our Queen and being exactly as we would expect. But there is concerns around the issue of racism and, you know, wherever it’s found, those are things we have to tackle and I hope that, you know, as the UK, we’ve progressed through the pandemic, learning quite a lot more in the last year, and you know, as you say, no one’s named in it but, but where there’s those concerns about racism, then yeah, of course we must –”*

PM: *“I mean, you would have hung around the royals quite a lot, when you were in Downing Street in particular, and when Gordon was Chancellor, did you ever see, witness any racism?”*

SB: *“Well, I wouldn’t say that I hung around there. On a number of occasions, I was able, very, very privileged to be able to attend certain events and occasions with them, so no, of course I didn’t see anything”.*

Later at 08:21, the presenters discussed the interview with a panel of guests, including the singer Ms Chaka Khan (CK), the Sunday Times Royal correspondent Ms Roya Nikkhah (RN), the biographer of Princess Diana Mr Andrew Morton (AM) and television presenter Ms Trisha Goddard (TG):

SR: *“Well, Oprah Winfrey gasped in horror as the Duchess of Sussex claimed that a member of the Royal Family raised concerns about Archie’s skin colour before he was born”.*

PM: *“Well, the couple raised, refused to name the individual, saying it would be very damaging to them, so they’d rather damage the entire Royal Family by not naming them. Let’s have a listen”.*

A clip from the interview was then repeated:

DS: *“And also concerns and conversations about how dark his skin might be when he’s born”.*

OW: *“What?”*

DS: *“– several conversations about it”.*

OW: *“There’s a conversation with you –”*

DS: *“With Harry”.*

OW: *“– about how dark your baby is going to be?”*

DS: *“Potentially, and what that would mean or look like”.*

OW: *"Ooh.... What was that conversation?"*

PH: *"That conversation I'm never going to share. Um, but at the time, at the time it was awkward, I was a bit shocked. Um –"*

OW: *"Can you tell us what the question was?"*

PH: *"No, I don't, I'm not comfortable sharing that".*

The discussion of the interview then continued with the presenters and panel of guests:

SR: *"Well, joining us now, Grammy Award winning singer Chaka Khan, Sunday Times royal correspondent Roya Nikkhah, Princess Diana's biographer Andrew Morton and television presenter Trisha Goddard".*

PM: *"One of the most eclectic panels in the history of live television. So welcome to all of you. Um, Chaka Khan. Let me start with you. Your reaction".*

CK: *"Hi, how are you?"*

PM: *"First of all, lovely to speak to you again. I interviewed you many years ago at CNN and we had a great time, but this is an extraordinary moment isn't it, I think, for the British monarchy, and particularly the way it's being portrayed in America. What, what is your take on this interview?"*

CK: *"I have to say that, um, I, I, I really, I understood where she was coming from and what she was going through as well. I, I, I went through a lot of the same, we were in very similar circumstances as well in this country and all over the world, really. It's very sad that it had to get to the extreme with her and her husband where they are fearing for their very lives, you know, and are not in their own country. It's sad, you know".*

PM: *"I think, I mean, that is the overriding feeling many will have. Trisha Goddard, I mean, it is sad. But some of the stuff they've been coming out with in this interview is genuinely explosive and very damaging to the image of the monarchy. And of course at the head of the monarchy remains the Queen, whose 99-year-old husband is currently seriously ill in hospital".*

TG: [Live feed is disrupted, and sound is distorted]

SR: *"OK, Trisha, I'm terribly sorry to interrupt, but the sound, we're missing what you're saying and what you're saying is very important, so we're just going to try and reconnect so that we can make sure that people hear exactly what you're saying. And apologies to the viewers for that. Roya Nikkhah, you are royal correspondent for The Sunday Times. These*

accusations made about the Royal Family are explosive. That Meghan felt controlled, that Prince Harry felt let down by his father, that there is an accusation of racism over the way that their unborn child was treated. Questions about his skin colour and also about whether he would be given the title of Prince. Accusations that they were abandoned, that their security was not paid for, um, and that they were therefore at risk. Royalty, normally the, the Royal Family never explain, never complain, but they are in a position now where there are so many allegations about them that must be taken seriously. How are they responding this morning and how do you think they should respond?"

RN: *"Well, first things first Susanna, the Queen will be at Windsor Castle now having breakfast, on her own of course, Prince Philip is still in hospital and she is going to be receiving a briefing from her communications secretary on the explosive allegations that have come out of this interview and my understanding is that Buckingham Palace don't want to rush anything out, any kind of response. They want to take time to consider the allegations, but let's make no bones about it and you have been talking about it all morning with your, with your other guests and so has Piers. We have never heard anything like this in any previous royal interview. The things that Harry and Meghan have said, the picture they have painted of an institution, of personal family members is dynamite and I think Buckingham Palace are probably right to take their time. What they come out with next, whatever statement comes out from Buckingham Palace is going to be crucial in the narrative. Because the picture that Harry and Meghan have painted, they have effectively said that family members are racist, that, you know, Meghan was told she couldn't leave the house and go out for lunch, that she didn't leave the house for more than twice in four months, that members of the Royal Family and staff members ignored her when she said she was suicidal. These are hugely disturbing claims and Buckingham Palace will need to be very methodical in responding to each and every one of them. And the other thing I would say –"*

PM: *"Yeah they will. But let's not forget that, just a few days ago, when explosive claims emerged about alleged bullying by Meghan Markle that drove young female staff out of the Palace, we were immediately told by Meghan Markle's people that none of this should be taken seriously, it should all just be dismissed. You know, it, why should we take anything they're saying seriously by the same criteria?"*

SR: *"Because we should take all these allegations seriously, all of them".*

PM: *"Or is it only if Meghan and Harry are the victims that we're supposed to take it seriously?"*

RN: *"I think Buckingham Palace will take these allegations seriously, and I think we will hear from Buckingham Palace on quite a few of these claims, but they will want to take their time. This will be the first time they have heard any of this. You know, the other thing is we are told, we were told at the end of that interview, I watched it last night as it went out, that there is a lot more material and that Oprah is going to be talking about that on CBS this morning. Buckingham Palace will be bracing themselves for what more is going to come out".*

PM: *"Yeah, and unless, you know, Trisha, you mentioned before, we couldn't really hear you but I could hear you, talking about the media coverage and so on they were receiving. I just want to remind people again of the front pages when they got engaged and when they got married, which we've got here I think. This is a montage".*

Newspaper front pages from the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's engagement and wedding day were shown on screen.

PM: *"You could not get a bigger collection of more ecstatic front pages welcoming the first bi-racial woman to the Royal Family. I remember covering the wedding. There was euphoria –"*

TG: *"But that's –"*

PM: *"– from the public and the media and yet, she says in the interview 'From the beginning of our relationship, the press were racist'".*

TG: *"But, the point that I think she was making was that headline that said 'Straight Outta Compton'. Now that might not mean anything to other people but to a Black person, Chaka you'd understand this, it is, it is very painful. It's saying 'you're ghetto', that 'you're rough' and other people might laugh it off but remember, if you've lived with this backdrop bubbling away. Piers, if I can, I'd liken it to if you're, if you're blind, if you're sight-impaired your whole life. Somebody might say nasty things to you every so often, but your whole life is affected by where people place things or don't place things, or whether there's a steps, or there's a ramp, your accessibility to life, how much opportunity you may or may not have. She, I don't think she was ready for this at all, and I actually don't think Harry was either. I think it's, I know from experience, it is very painful for a white partner to see first-hand all these little microaggressions and what have you and they're shocked. If somebody brings up 'Yeah but what colour is your child going to be?' and I've been in that situation as well, it is deeply shocking. It might not seem shocking to the person saying it –"*

PM: *"Trisha, let me jump in on that. We don't know the context of that conversation. We don't know who's supposed to have said it".*

TG: *"No, we don't, but –"*

PM: *"Can I, can I put to you just a scenario that may have happened, and I wonder whether you find this, you would automatically think this is offensive and racist. If you have two parents, one's White and one's Black, as in Meghan's case, and she's pregnant and going to have a baby, is it racist and offensive for a family member to say 'Oh, what colour might the baby be?' I mean, I would imagine in most families that might be a question they think and they might ask, but not, but not in a racist or derogatory manner. Now tell me, tell me if I'm wrong".*

TG: *"Why does it matter? Piers, Piers, why does it matter what colour a child is, as long the child is healthy?"*

PM: *"I'm not saying it matters. It's just curiosity, it might just be curiosity, Trisha. In other words, it may not have been a malevolent thing to say".*

TG: *"Listen, oh Piers, Piers. Here's another curious thing. People often, when I've got my hair natural, people are curious about what my hair feels like. So they'll come up behind me while I'm doing something and run their filthy hands through my hair. It's only curiosity. They might make comment about my feet or talk about me in front of me. It's only curiosity. But day in and day out –"*

PM: *"Any context that conversation may, we don't know who the conversation was with, or the context. But what you're saying is, any context in which that kind of conversation happened is automatically racist".*

TG: *"If you are working against a backdrop of non-stop stuff, it doesn't take one straw, you know, it only takes one straw to break the camel's back. And what gets me is why, why is everybody else such an expert about racism against Black people? I'm sorry, you know. I'm sorry, Piers, you don't get to call out what is and isn't racism against Black people. You can call out all the other stuff, I will leave you to call out all the other stuff you want but leave the racism stuff to us, eh?"*

PM: *"I just think, OK. I think when Meghan Markle calls the Royal Family a racist institution, it's a very serious allegations. She better –"*

SR: *"She doesn't use that phrase. She doesn't use the phrase 'racist institution'".*

TG: *"She doesn't, when does she say that?"*

PM: *"Actually they do, sorry, they do. They portrayed the Royal Family as racist and it's a very incendiary charge –"*

TG: *"They didn't say it".*

PM: *"- and I don't think it actually is fair to the Royal Family to not name the supposed racist. Let's bring in Andrew Morton, Andrew. I don't need to tell you about royal turmoil -"*

SR: *"Or royal interviews and the impact that they have".*

PM: *"- how does this, yeah, how does this compare to the Diana ongoing saga?"*

AM: *"Well, I have to say my jaw dropped watching that interview and it is very similar to the Panorama interview 25 years ago that Martin Bashir conducted. The one thing that intrigues me about this, this whole, the whole business of Meghan saying that, that, that the baby and the colour of the baby in relation to security and also to whether or not it's been made a Prince or a Princess is confusing because it's the Metropolitan Police who decide security. It's, it's the Queen who is the font of all honour. So, in a way, Meghan and Harry are accusing the Queen of racism by default, and I find that allegation quite explosive".*

PM: *"I completely agree. This whole thing that she says about how the only reason Archie isn't allowed to be a Prince has got nothing to do with royal protocol, but all to do with his potential skin colour, and that it would be the Queen that decides that title. That is calling the Queen a racist".*

AM: *"Yeah, the next stage, I think, has got to be, that the Metropolitan Police will have to give a, a, a reason why Archie wasn't going to be given security".*

SR: *"Well, I think that it is, again, another serious issue that the whole Royal family has to deal with because I think, I feel like why would they not have security when Prince Harry was still at risk. And as Meghan and Harry both say, they had death threats against them. I'm not sure why people how people can understand that that security if you want taken away".*

PM: *"Because if you decide to go, because they quit royal duty, they quit the country".*

SR: *"They were still the same people, under the same threat".*

PM: *"They didn't want to do the hard yards on a wet Wednesday in Stoke in an old people's home. They wanted to live in California, in luxury and make hundreds of millions out of Netflix".*

SR: *"I just want to, before, OK, can I -"*

PM: *"They can pay for their own security. Chaka Khan, this whole issue of -"*

SR: *"Never mind me, never mind me".*

PM: *"No no, I mind you, Chaka Khan though is a superstar guest and I'd like to give her some airtime".*

SR: *"I was about to ask a question, Chaka Khan a question".*

PM: *"Go on then".*

SR: *"Which is, what is it like when you're as high profile as you are and you receive the sort of coverage that you say you recognise Meghan received. What does that do to you?"*

CK: *"Right, well yeah no one can stand, no one can talk about what's going on in her mind and heart, unless you're standing in her shoes. Um, and that's where it gets really tricky. We're talking about racism here. Where I'm coming from a country that is very racist. I lived in Britain for over 30 years and I found some of the same stuff going on that I've seen all over the world. And if they're little, it's a little bitty ways that are so finely tuned by now that it's almost hard to find, it is hard to call out. You know I think when the Royal Family does look into all of her 'false accusations' [shows quote marks with hands]. They're going to have to look pretty deep and I'm only praying as an American. I'm not a Britisher, but I'm only hoping and praying that they will look into what she is alleging [sic] and good to and make it to rights".*

PM: *"Well I think that's important. It's also important we look into the ongoing allegations about Meghan Markle bullying people, which she so keen to dismiss but with actually from my information are actually quite serious. Andrew Morton. How does this, what would Diana make of this do you think? I mean she would not surely be enjoying any of this".*

AM: *"Now, well, I think the irony is she would be enjoying it. It's almost like Diana's getting her revenge from beyond the grave. I mean, remember she was the trailblazer in this, she put the boot into Prince Charles twenty odd years ago. She talked about wanting to be the Queen of People's Hearts and got an which, which prompted the Queen herself to get involved in their divorce".*

PM: *"She wouldn't want William and Harry at war. They don't talk at the moment, I know for a fact they are not talking".*

AM: *"No, there's no question at all that she would want William and Harry to reconcile, but remember, she was actually thinking of moving to Malibu".*

PM: *"Yeah".*

- AM: *"She was going to buy Julie Andrews' house, so she says she could have been with. And also, Oprah was going to interview her, and then Martin Bashir swooped in".*
- SR: *"There are so many echoes. Before we let you go Roya Nikkhah, you're a Royal correspondent. You're very plugged in, you've got great sources, just tell us about these two weddings because Meghan and Harry say that the big multimillion-pound wedding, well, it seems to have been a fake. They were already married before that ceremony took place. Do you know what happened, which one was the real wedding?"*
- RN: *"Well Susanna that was absolutely news to me I have to say. And I think that is one of the points in the interview that I think the public are going to have really interesting reactions for because we very much felt and you know that the Royal press were covering it, the British public is so behind that amazing day that that was their wedding, that was the Royal wedding and suddenly we're told that, well, that wasn't actually the Royal wedding, the Royal wedding was three days earlier in the back garden at Kensington Palace. Quite a revelation. I should think Lambeth Palace phones are going to be ringing off their hooks this morning with questions for the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby to answer. I think the only other thing I'd say is this is just a desperately sad family situation. I know Harry says he hopes that time will heal those family bonds. My goodness me, it's going to be a lot harder after this interview".*
- PM: *"I think William is going to be absolutely spitting blood about the way Meghan Markle took down his wife on national TV. I think he's going to be seething at the betrayal, and people can dress this up any way they like. This is supposedly the Duke and Duchess of Privacy spending two hours revealing all sorts of unbelievable secrets about their family".*
- SR: *"They have never said they want 100% privacy".*
- PM: *"We were told that Oprah had nothing off limits? Not a question about her own father, her own family. Not one question about why she's disowned all her own family, why none of the family were at the wedding. But in the place of the family was Oprah Winfrey who she had met once in her life. Sorry I'm calling this out for what I see it as, which is somebody who's a ruthless social climber and is now destroying or trying to destroy the image of the monarchy in this country and I think it's shameful".*
- SR: *"I think it's desperately, desperately sad".*

PM: *"But everyone is entitled to their opinions. Trisha, final question for you. If you tried to invent a show that had all this, you'd reject it as being too outlandish".*

SR: *"Well, you'd called it The Crown".*

TG: *"No, actually I, I wouldn't. The name of the show would be 'Bullying' Piers and I'm afraid at the moment you'd be the star".*

PM: *"Really? Not Meghan Markle who drove out a load of female staff with her bullying or does that not count?"*

TG: *"No, Piers listening to you this morning, I'm saddened, and you know what I wish for you? I wish for you only really wonderful things. I hope that one of your sons meets a beautiful Black woman and gets married to them and then you will understand".*

PM: *"Actually, I would love that. Why would I have any problem with that? Why does every criticism of these two have to be framed with racism?"*

TG: *"You won't have a problem with it, you'll have to hear her problems with it".*

PM: *"Yeah, I'd also like to have her bullying investigated properly. The bullying that no one seems to want to take seriously".*

TG: *"It should have been done three years ago".*

SR: *"Those allegations are being investigated; an enquiry has been launched".*

PM: *"Well, we will see won't we. They have been dismissed out of hand; her victims don't count. Anyway, thank you all, especially for the life lecture Trisha, appreciate it".*

The programme ended with the following:

PM: *"Good Morning Britain is back tomorrow from six".*

Tuesday 9 March 2021

The following day, Tuesday 9 March 2021, and after the interview had been broadcast in full in the UK, the GMB programme continued to discuss the interview. Ms Reid, Mr Morgan and Mr Alex Beresford (AB) picked up the previous day's conversation as follows:

SR: *"Shall we address the big interview bombshells last night?"*

PM: *"Well, everyone watched it last night. Very interesting reading my family chat group blowing up, I bet like everybody else's did".*

- SR: *“Well, everything was blowing up, I mean, social media and we understand obviously there are huge ramifications for the Palace as well, and the Royal Family”.*
- PM: *“And a lot more stuff spilling out. So Oprah Winfrey’s been releasing more clips, including, as we’ve just seen, the clip about Thomas Markle, Meghan Markle’s first on-camera comments about her father and she lets him have it. Now, we’ve got Thomas Markle later on the programme. He will be responding both to what she says about him in public for the first time and also, of course, his further thoughts about this growing scandal involving the Royal Family”.*
- SR: *“And remember, he hasn’t spoken to his daughter since the royal wedding and he has never met Prince Harry and, of course, he has never met his grandson either. So, as I said yesterday, the overwhelming sense from this interview is just how sad it is. Sad for everybody”.*
- PM: *“Well, imagine watching that interview if you’re Thomas Markle. Here he is actually watching it as it happened in real time. I mean, that’s her father who has never met his grandson, he’s never met his son-in-law, he had to watch Prince Charles walk his daughter down the aisle after he suffered a heart attack and couldn’t make the trip. I’ve always felt sorry for Thomas Markle, always felt he got thrown to the wolves a bit, left to his own devices. Kept being photographed looking scruffy and carrying beer, and got approached by photographer and decided that ‘Yeah, OK, I wouldn’t mind some nicer pictures’. Did some pictures. Of course, Harry has this pathological hatred of all photography”.*
- SR: *“Well, and also, as Harry and Meghan have said, they feel that there is a very, there is a sort of contract with the tabloids that they feel is, is dominated by fear and so they, we know, you know, you always say that they want 100% privacy. I disagree. I think what they want is to have some element of control over what is released, what isn’t released and that, when things are untrue, they need to be protected from those stories. They’ve made that extremely clear, and so when her father then does a deal with a pap, I think it’s only reasonable that Meghan would say, ‘Well, can you be honest about that?’ Let’s have a look at what Prince Harry says about the control of the press”.*

A clip from the interview was played of the Duke talking to Ms Winfrey:

- PH: *“But I also am acutely aware of where my family stand and how scared they are of the tabloids turning on them. There is a level of control by fear that has existed for generations. I mean, generation after generation after generation”.*

OW: *"But who is controlling whom? It's the institution, from our point of view, just the public, it's –"*

PH: *"Yeah, but the institution survives based on that, on that perception".*

The presenters then continued to discuss the interview:

PM: *"What a strange thing, if you talk to the –"*

SR: *"If you feel afraid of the coverage that you're getting, I think it, you know, it's understandable that she would feel like she wanted to know if a member of her family was doing a deal".*

PM: *"If you talk to most of the senior royals now, I can guarantee you, because I know this for a fact, they would all say they have a much better relationship with the media than they've ever had in this country, actually. That the kids generally get left alone now, that the paparazzi action around them is much better regulated, is nowhere near as intense as it was in the Diana era where everyone knows it got out of hand".*

SR: *"Mm".*

PM: *"You know, they feel like they get a much fairer crack of the whip from the papers now, and yet this is the time. You see, what's lingering with Harry, he can't let it go what happened with his mother and I completely understand that".*

SR: *"Yeah".*

PM: *"I would probably feel the same way. But William went through exactly the same thing".*

SR: *"Yeah".*

PM: *"And he's managed to come to terms with the media and he works with the media and he recognizes the media is there, actually, it performs two roles. One's to hold them to account because they're publicly funded, the Royal Family. But secondly, he also wants to promote the monarchy, you know, because if the media doesn't promote the monarchy, the monarchy slowly dies out. Monarchies have died out all over Europe".*

SR: *"OK, but something, but something –"*

AB: *"Piers, Piers".*

SR: *"Alex, Alex, yes".*

PM: *"Well, hang on, hang on, I'm going to come to Alex in a sec. Um –"*

AB: *"Oh, OK, alright, I'll wait".*

SR: *"Well".*

PM: *"Well, do you mind waiting?"*

AB: *"Well, actually I don't, no, no. Carry on".*

PM: *"Up to you, mate. I was just going to, what did you want to say?"*

SR: *"I was going to make the point, Alex, that something very different happened with Prince Harry, was that he was in a relationship with a woman who was very different, and, and he felt, they felt that the press then turned on them and was racist".*

AB: *"They, they, they have had an overwhelming amount of negative press. You know, I watched the programme yesterday and yes, they had some great press around the wedding, but what press is going to trash someone's special day? There was bad press around the engagement, before the engagement, and everything that has followed since has been incredibly damaging, quite clearly to Meghan's mental health and also to Harry and, and, and I hear Piers say that, you know, William has gone through the same thing, but do you know what? Siblings experience tragedy in their life and one will be absolutely fine and brush it off and the other will not be able to deal with it so strongly, and that's clearly what has happened with Prince Harry in this situation. He walked behind his mother's coffin at a tender, tender age in front of the globe. That is going to shape a young boy for the rest of his life. So I think that we need to all take a step back. And I understand that you don't like Meghan Markle. You've made it so clear a number of times on this programme, a number of times. And I understand that you've got a personal relationship with Meghan Markle, or had one and she cut you off. She's entitled to cut you off if she wants to. Has she said anything about you since she cut you off? I don't think she has, but yet you continue to trash her –"*

PM: *"OK, I'm done with this".*

AB: *"No, no, no".*

PM: *"Sorry, no, sorry".*

AB: *"Oh, do you know what? That's pathetic".*

PM: *"You can trash me, mate, but not on my own show. See you later".*

AB: *"No, no, no, I'm being –"*

PM: *"Sorry, can't do this".*

AB: *"This is absolutely diabolical behaviour. You, I'm sorry, but Piers spouts off on a regular basis and we all have to sit there and listen. Six thirty to seven o'clock yesterday was incredibly hard to watch, incredibly hard to watch. This is, this is, this, you know, he, he has the ability to come in here and talk from a position where he, where he doesn't fully understand".*

SR: *"OK".*

AB: *"And I'm absolutely –"*

SR: *"I think we need to, I think we need to just all take a break. We'll see you in a moment".*

Later Mr Morgan returned to the studio and the conversation continued:

SR: *"Well, clearly what that interview has done is it has raised a lot of emotion, a lot of tension, um, and there are enormous issues at stake here. Very important issues".*

AB: *"I don't think they are issues that we can't overcome through conversation".*

SR: *"Yeah".*

PM: *"Yeah, but what we need to do, Alex, is talk about them in a civilized manner given we work at the same show on the same team".*

AB: *"Piers, Piers, I wasn't –"*

PM: *"You launching into a pretty personal derogatory monologue at one of your colleagues –"*

AB: *"No, no, no, I wasn't, no, no, no –"*

PM: *"– isn't probably the best way to go about it, alright?"*

AB: *"– Piers, Piers –"*

PM: *"No, sorry. As much as I'd like to sit here taking abuse from you for hours on end, that's not going to happen".*

AB: *"Piers, Piers. Just back up, back up for one second and let me finish. I'm not trying to come on this show and take you down, tear you apart, that is –"*

PM: *"That's exactly what you tried to do".*

AB: *"No, that's, that's not –"*

PM: *"And I'm just not prepared to do that".*

AB: *"No, no, Piers. Let me talk".*

PM: *"I'll take it from people outside".*

AB: *"Let me –"*

PM: *"I'm going not to take it from you as one of our team".*

AB: *"Hold on, just because, Piers, because, just because we're on the same side doesn't mean we have to have the same view. I am allowed –"*

PM: *"No, you can express your view without being personally derogatory".*

AB: *"No, hold on. Listen, the thing for, this whole situation is very personal for me and I'm, I'm not by no way shape or form accusing you of being a racist. You know, I have the luxury of knowing you on and off screen and we've had conversations. I know where you stand on things. I'm not –"*

SR: *"Let's just make that clear that you do have these conversations all the time off-air".*

AB: *"All the time. All the time. And I've got a great amount of respect for you, Piers".*

PM: *"I wanted you on the show today –"*

AB: *"No, because –"*

PM: *"– because you sent me a really thoughtful and nuanced message about it –"*

AB: *"I did, because, exactly, because, yeah, because, because, Piers –"*

PM: *"– and I thought we could have a thoughtful and nuanced conversation".*

SR: *"Well, let's have that thoughtful and nuanced conversation because that's important to viewers".*

AB: *"I'm tired, I'm tired of finding a different way to explain, not to you, but to so many people on why what is being said is so wrong".*

PM: *"Right, lets, alright, let's get into –"*

AB: *"I, I've, I've walked into institutions as the only person of colour and experienced covert and overt racism on so many occasions. And why the Meghan interview really resonates with me is because an ex-work colleague, not of this show, asked me if I was worried about the shade of cocoa that my son was going to come out".*

PM: *"Right".*

AB: *"So I fully understand the hurt that is behind all of that".*

PM: *"Right, let me ask –"*

AB: *"And when you're mixed race what you find, in my personal experience and there may be other people that may come forward and say this, is that when you are a lighter shade of Black, people gain confidence and feel that they can say things to you that they wouldn't say to a Black person".*

SR: *"That's such an interesting point".*

AB: *"And that is my experience of all of this".*

PM: *"Right, and by the way, I completely respect that, right, and that's why I wanted to get you on the programme today. It was my suggestion to have you on to talk about this, right".*

AB: *"But Piers, and thank you so much for having me on the programme. I really appreciate it, but I just want you also to be aware of the power of your words and I'm not saying that you're a racist. But what I do –"*

PM: *"What are you saying?"*

AB: *"What I, do you know what I honestly feel? I feel as though, because of your previous relationship with Meghan Markle, you –"*

PM: *"I didn't have a relationship with Meghan Markle".*

AB: *"No, but you met with her, you knew her".*

PM: *"I knew her briefly, right".*

AB: *"So, we've joked about it on the show".*

PM: *"All that did, all that did was –"*

AB: *"Piers".*

PM: *"I'm allowed to speak".*

AB: *"OK, talk".*

PM: *"All that did was inform me that she's a bit of a cut and run".*

AB: *"Right".*

PM: *"Right, throughout her life, all her family, her father, her ex-husband, her ex-friend, they've all been cut out of her life, right? It's an interesting observation that I happen to be one of those people –"*

AB: *"An interesting, an interesting observation but I do feel in this situation –"*

PM: *"Let me, can I finish this sentence please?"*

AB: *"– that you are struggling –"*

SR: *"Guys, guys, guys, if we are going to have this conversation –"*

PM: *"You've got to let me talk".*

AB: *"Talk".*

PM: *"Right, can we talk about the programme? It doesn't really matter what I think of Meghan Markle. It doesn't matter whether I believe her or not. What matters is the damage that she is accused of doing to the Royal Family and let me ask you, honestly, on the issue of race –"*

AB: *"Mmhmm".*

PM: *"– she is now got the whole of America and the rest of the world, frankly, looking upon the Palace, the monarchy, the Queen, everyone in the Royal Family, as a bunch of racists. And it all comes down to two things that she said in the interview. One is something she didn't hear, but Harry reported back to her that a senior member of the Royal Family that wasn't the Queen or Prince Philip, so presumably is either Charles or William, we would hazard a guess, has made a comment to Harry about what colour skin his baby may be if the relationship progresses, apparently, before the wedding".*

AB: *"OK, but there was concern about the way in which that question was asked".*

PM: *"Well, hang on. That's my question for you. She said there was concern. Harry didn't say that. And my question for you is this, and it's a, it's a straight question that I think a lot of people are asking. Because you've been in this position, right? And you've been, you've been equally offended".*

AB: *"Yeah".*

SR: *"On the receiving end of that question".*

PM: *"Is there, is there a qualitative difference between somebody, perhaps innocently saying to you out of interest, 'If you have one parent is White, one parent is Black, you know, what colour could your baby be?'"*

AB: *"OK –"*

PM: *"Let me finish. 'What colour could your baby be?' Is there a difference between that question phrased in that innocent perhaps way and somebody doing it in a tone that says 'Well, how dark is your baby going to be?' in a derogatory and perhaps racist tone?"*

AB: *"Well, I think, and that, right, exactly, and there is a difference, but what we're getting from the interview is that it was said in a negative way".*

PM: *"She said that, but he didn't, did he?"*

AB: *"Listen, stop separating Harry and Meghan. They are a team, quite clearly, a very strong team and I do believe that she backs him up and he backs her up".*

PM: *"Right".*

AB: *"So, and like I said, tone and language is everything. When it was –"*

PM: *"But is there a, OK, but let me ask you, Alex, on that point, is there a difference?"*

AB: *"– when it was said to me, the key word, the key word was 'Are you worried?'"*

PM: *"Right".*

SR: *"Yeah".*

PM: *"Right, but that to me is racist".*

AB: *"OK, and there's a big difference".*

PM: *"That to me is racist".*

SR: *"But that's what she reports".*

AB: *"It is racist".*

SR: *"She reports concern".*

PM: *"But do you think it's racist? This is a legitimate question many people have asked. Is it racist, do you think, if, for argument's sake, it was William or Charles. Let's not put a name to this person, we don't know, and part of the problem, I know you agree with me about this, it would be easier if they just said who it was".*

AB: *"Right".*

PM: *"Right, I'll come to that, but is there a difference, if it was said perhaps in all innocence, right, and they just said 'What, what colour baby might you have?' without any suggestion of it being a concern or a worry if it had darker skin, would that in itself, would just the question be racist?"*

AB: *"That in itself is fine, but you have to think about how it feels on the receiving end, because what we're speculating is as to how that message was delivered –"*

PM: *"I don't know how it was communicated –"*

AB: *"– right, you don't know, but ""*

PM: *"– but what I would say to you is, if it was done, if it was done as a worry or concern –"*

AB: *"We also have to take into consideration how it felt. The other thing that we also have to think about, and I have publicly said this on Twitter, Piers. I agree with you now that I feel that they should have named the person because all it's led to is all of us asking loads of questions and I personally am looking at the Royal Family as to which one could it be?"*

PM: *"Who's the racist? Yeah".*

AB: *"Who's the racist? But, but, but again we have to also just take a step back. Do you know how much courage it takes to actually speak about racism? To actually call it out? Because I've been in situations where I haven't called out every single bit of racism that's happened to me based on how I've been treated or how it was handled in the past".*

SR: *"Because you're worried about a backlash".*

AB: *"And you're also worried about a backlash and there will be people that will treat Harry and Meghan differently because they've spoken out".*

PM: *"OK".*

AB: *"But this is the whole thing, we've got to get comfortable talking about the uncomfortable. And that's why it's important for me and you to have this conversation, because –"*

PM: *"Right, but let's just not make it personal then, it's fine".*

AB: *"It's not, Piers –"*

PM: *"You made it personal, but let's move on from that".*

AB: *"Piers, you know what, it's hard because, you know what, we talk, we talk personally about, you know, people on this show and we give our opinions on them, don't we? So, actually, sometimes it does come back at you. We have to be, you know –"*

PM: *"It's fine, it's just the way it was done. We can disagree about that. Let's move on –"*

SR: *"I think it's –"*

PM: *"It's fine, I don't think people really care too much about you and me anymore. What –"*

AB: *"It's not about me and you, and I'm not here because –"*

PM: *"Well, let's stop talking about me and you then. Let's move on to the second part of their charge of racism. Meghan Markle said that there was a decision taken by the Palace to stop Archie being a Prince based on his potential skin colour. That is completely untrue. That's just not true. Now, the damaging effect of that, plus whatever may have been said to Harry, and we don't know what it was or the context and we don't know who said it, but it was those two things have detonated a, as you know, a racially charged bomb at the Palace, which is almost impossible for them to refute because they don't talk in public about this kind of thing, and people aren't probably going to believe them even if they do now. But that's what concerns me, is that the first part of the allegation, we don't know any of the details or who said it or how they said it, and the second one is completely untrue. Meghan just got it wrong. Archie hasn't been prevented from being a Prince because of his skin colour, and that's been now believed by Americans on national television there, and that is damaging".*

AB: *"But again, do you know what? It's their lived experience. And –"*

PM: *"No, it's not true".*

AB: *"Piers, it's their lived experience. And again, this is, this is where the confusion comes in. You know, how do you sometimes identify covert racism? It's actually quite hard because it's not there –"*

PM: *"No, but Alex, on that one it's not true. There's no covert racism –"*

SR: *"I know but Piers, but Piers, what you're saying is there are facts –"*

AB: *"Right".*

SR: *"And what Alex is saying is there is an experience and a perception of those facts that you only appreciate when you're in that situation".*

PM: *"No, I'm sorry, on that second part, on the first part I agree. If it turns out, let me make it crystal clear where I stand on this. If it turns out that a senior member of the Royal Family, a future King, perhaps, of this country. We don't know who it is. I don't want to cast, the aspersions are being cast because they won't say, but they have eliminated the Queen and Prince Philip, so they've gone half way, which I think is incredibly unfair on the ones who are left. Say it is a future King that said this in a derogatory way. We can't have a racist King".*

AB: *"We can't".*

PM: *"So that to me would be racism".*

AB: *"But –"*

PM: *"If it was said in a derogatory, but the second part of the charge, that Harry, that Archie has been banned from being a Prince because of his skin colour is just untrue. It's nothing to do with racism. The fact itself on which she's based that, that claim is not true".*

SR: *"Except her perception appears to be that it might have been motivated by race".*

PM: *"Well, it's like me saying 'The sky's blue outside, my perception is it's raining'. It's, you can't muck around with facts. She got the facts wrong on that. It's been demonstrated today in every paper. That fact is simply untrue. There's been no discrimination against Archie in terms of being called a Prince because of his skin colour, because he's not entitled at the moment to be called Prince. It's just the rules of the Palace set by, set 100 years ago".*

SR: *"The trouble is, she's explaining her experience of it".*

AB: *"Exactly, she's explaining her experience of it, and do you know what? We have not walked in her shoes, so I wouldn't –"*

PM: *"But you can't, I don't care what your experience is –"*

AB: *"I know but Piers –"*

PM: *"– if the fact you're basing it on is wrong".*

AB: *"– she still, you know what, you're still entitled to your, to perception".*

PM: *"Not about facts, you're not".*

AB: *"But and that's, and that's also coming through lived experience".*

PM: *"No but Alex, on that one, you're not entitled to, I don't care about her feelings if the fact is wrong".*

AB: *"OK but what concerns me, what concerns me more is the comment about the colour of the baby's skin".*

PM: *"Right, right".*

AB: *"OK, we, you know, we all feel passionately about different things. OK, you know, we've not even, you know, spoken about the mental health and all of that".*

PM: *"Well we're coming to that".*

AB: *"Well we'll come to that. But, you know, it's, it's, it's really important that we have these conversations because what I've noticed on Twitter,*

you know, particularly over the last few days is that, you know, this, this, this, this interview and what's happening with the Royal Family, the ripple effect is huge".

PM: *"Huge".*

SR: *"It's not a ripple, Alex, it's a tsunami".*

AB: *"To the point where me and you are on here and we feel so passionately about it and it's great –"*

PM: *"I'm genuinely feel –"*

AB: *" – and I want to talk about it and I do feel as though, you know, yeah, of course, if we find out who it is, I'm sure, you know, you will be right behind me and I'll be right behind you, yeah, you know, talking about how wrong it is and how, you know –"*

PM: *"No question".*

AB: *"No question whatsoever. But what I find is that people are, you know, don't always want to accept that it's a possibility that something like this has happened and this is a thing with racism, right? Racism isn't always caught on camera. Racism isn't always a Black man laid on the floor with a White police officer's knee in his neck. It comes in all different shapes and forms".*

PM: *"I totally agree with you".*

AB: *"What I want to see is the same energy that we had back in the summer right now".*

PM: *"Yes, but OK, but let me just put a little damper on this, right? One of the two charges of racism, perhaps the most incendiary, that actually he was being discriminated against, because the Queen decides all the titles. So what she was basically saying is 'The Queen's a racist who stopped Archie being a Prince because of his skin colour'. We know that is completely untrue, so –"*

AB: *"I don't, I don't know that the Queen's a racist. I don't, I would like to think that the Queen is not a racist. I don't think she is a racist".*

PM: *"Right, my point is this –"*

AB: *"OK, but he's obviously got a difficult relationship with her –"*

PM: *"No, but Alex, Alex –"*

AB: *" – and this is no ordinary family, Piers, because, you know, as we heard from the interview yesterday –"*

PM: *"– Alex, I know, I know, but Alex, do you accept, do you accept on that point, Meghan just got it wrong?"*

AB: *"I, like I said, I am not an expert on royal protocols. I am not an expert".*

PM: *"But the experts who are have all said, unanimously –"*

AB: *"They've all said but, again, they said something different. Piers –"*

PM: *"They haven't said something different".*

AB: *"– I'm, I'm happy to listen to both sides –"*

SR: *"Well, hang on, hang on, so –"*

AB: *"Well, they feel a certain way. They feel that Archie hasn't been given a title –"*

SR: *"Exactly so, Prince William –"*

AB: *"– because of the colour of skin".*

PM: *"But we know that's not true".*

SR: *"Well, hang on a moment. So Prince –"*

AB: *"But you don't know that it's not true because –"*

PM: *"We do, we do".*

AB: *"No, think about it –"*

SR: *"Can we just talk about this particular fact?"*

AB: *"Piers, if it's, if we, if we think about the possibility that what they're saying is true, and that they were worried about how dark Archie would be, it's also a possibility that they might not want him to be a Prince. They might not want him to have a title. And the thing is, shock horror, these things happen in life. Unfortunately, this is the way it goes sometimes. Everyone's acting like they're fully surprised. I can't say that I'm fully surprised to hear these allegations, you know, and it is important to realise that sometimes, you know what, we don't even know we've got these problems in our family. You might have an all-White family and one day someone of colour walks in –"*

PM: *"I would love that".*

AB: *"– and you find out, I know, and, and, and you find out –"*

PM: *"I would love that. Trisha Goddard yesterday said to me, you know, 'Wait until, you know, one of your sons marries a Black woman'. I was like 'I would love that'".*

AB: *"Listen, and do you know what Piers, I wouldn't be surprised if one of your sons brought a woman of colour –"*

PM: *"What part of your knowledge of me would think I wouldn't embrace and welcome her?"*

AB: *"Piers, but, the thing is, I'm not saying, this is what I'm saying. We've had, we have conversations on the show. We have conversations off the show. OK, and I don't feel that you are a racist. I'm sorry and if people say to me 'Piers Morgan, he's'. I will, I will 100% -"*

PM: *"I don't have a racist bone in my body".*

AB: *"Right, because my, I'm, I'm judging you on my experience of you, and my experience of you is not that".*

PM: *"Right".*

SR: *"OK".*

AB: *"But that's why, but that's why I just feel as though the stance that you were taking on it yesterday was so strong. I just feel that it was slightly clouded by the fact that you've had an experience with her and actually what this is really about is the fact that you don't like Meghan Markle, and that's OK. And it's OK that Meghan Markle might not be perfect".*

PM: *"All that did, let me just stress again –"*

AB: *"It's OK that she might be a little bit difficult".*

PM: *"– I did not know her that well. All it did was inform me that she has a bit of a streak in there where she cuts people out of her life and she moves on. That's fine. She's entitled to do that, but she's done it to her whole family, apart from her mum. We've got her dad coming on now, he's been disowned. You know, she's got a track record of it, which I just personally find is informative about her personality. I want to turn to another part of this, Hilary, which is really an important part of the story because it emerged in this interview, Meghan Markle said she had suicidal thoughts, felt very lonely in the Palace, felt suicidal and that she went to a senior member of the Royal Household and she told them about how she was feeling and they told her she couldn't get any help because it would be a bad look. Let's take a look at what she said".*

A clip from the interview was played:

DS: *"And I, I just didn't, I just didn't want to be alive anymore".*

OW: *"So, were you thinking of harming yourself? Were you having suicidal thoughts?"*

DS: *"Yes, this was very, very clear".*

OW: *"Wow".*

DS: *"I went to the institution and I said that I needed to go somewhere to get help. I said that I've never felt this way before and I need to go somewhere. And I was told that I couldn't, that it wouldn't be good for the institution".*

The presenters then continued to discuss the interview with Dr Hilary Jones (HJ):

PM: *"Now, when we talked about this yesterday, I said, as an all-encompassing thing, 'I don't believe what Meghan Markle is saying generally in this interview', and I still have serious concerns about the veracity of a lot of what she said. But let me just state for the record about my position on mental illness, right? And on suicide. On mental illness and suicide, these are clearly extremely serious things. They should be taken extremely seriously. And if somebody is feeling that way, they should get the treatment and the help that they need every time. And if they belong to an institution like the Royal Family and they go and seek that help, they should absolutely be given it. And if it turns out Meghan Markle, and I'm not, it's not for me to question whether she felt suicidal. I wasn't in her mind, and that's for her to say. If she, my real concern was a disbelief, frankly, and I'm prepared to be proven wrong on this and, if I'm wrong, it is a scandal, that she went to a senior member of the Royal Household, told them she was suicidal and was told she could not have any help because it would be a bad look for the family. If that is true, a, that person, if they are still there, should be fired and, b, the Royal Family have serious questions to be answered about how they handled it. But I would also throw in the mix that Prince Harry himself is, belongs to the top of several mental health charities. It does raise the question to me, he sought help himself, he's talked about that openly. Why could he not, in that eventuality, have gone and got Meghan the help that she needed, maybe via the charities that he represents?"*

HJ: *"Sure, right. So, I've been listening to everything that's gone on this morning and what's clear, what I hear is how, once again, we're reminded how strong emotions can change perspectives on things, can blow things out of proportion. And the Royal Family, take away the fact that it's Royal Family. Take away the fact that it's monarchy. This is a family. This is a family of grandparents, of parents, grandchildren, siblings, all of whom have gone through quite a lot of mental issues in the past. We have a man who lost his, his mother at a tender age in tragic circumstances and was raised by surrogate mothers who might not have had the skills to be as good as his own mother would have been. We've got a woman of mixed ethnicity who was previously*

married, who's expressed suicidal thoughts and can't apparently get the help that she needs. We've got grandparents who perhaps are distanced because of the role that they play. We've got siblings who are at a different stage in the hierarchy, and perhaps seen as more important. So, other families, ordinary families can identify with all of these issues. They are, they are no different just because they're Royals. They're no different to anybody else. And if, if she didn't get the help –"

SR: *"Except that in this situation, she was told that it was an issue, that it would not be a good look –"*

HJ: *"Yep, but, but, but you know –"*

SR: *"– and that's a terrible thing to be told and denied access to help".*

HJ: *"– but the Royal Family have, the Royal Family have medical –"*

PM: *"Is it unfair, look, I don't think it's unreasonable –"*

HJ: *"– they have medical expertise that come to them. They have a royal, there is a royal doctor. There are, there are plenty, there's plenty of help available. I can't believe that she was stopped from going to see somebody who could counsel her, talk through her issues, and what's necessary, the trouble is –"*

SR: *"When you say you can't believe it, you mean it is extraordinary that the family or the courtier stopped her doing it?"*

PM: *"Well, you're assuming it happened".*

HJ: *"Yeah absolutely, and do you know what, and because –"*

PM: *"No but hang on, I think, I'm sorry, I just want to jump in, Hilary, Hilary, Hilary, just, can we use the word alleged?"*

HJ: *"– because two people who, just a second, because two people who are damaged come together, it reinforces the problems. They support each other. They build a wall around themselves against everybody else. It amplifies the problem and so does being royal. It amplifies the problem just like Shakespeare in all his plays talked about human emotions but dressed it up around monarchy, whether it was Othello or Macbeth or whatever".*

PM: *"But Harry said, but Harry, OK, but Hilary –"*

HJ: *"Amplifies the problem".*

PM: *"Alright, but Harry said that, he said he didn't feel he could speak out about it because of the stigma. That was his version of this. He didn't talk about her being rejected or not being able to have any help, and I'm*

just curious about the dynamic there where Harry represents mental health charities, his wife said she was feeling suicidal, why, why would he not take her to get the help?"

HJ: *"Well, whatever she felt –"*

PM: *"Why does he need the Palace?"*

HJ: *"– what, whether, whether her criticisms are justified or not, it was real for her. She, she felt that she could not approach anybody in total confidence without the press getting hold of it and talk about the issues that were inside her heart. She didn't feel that she could do that. You know, whether you, whether we believe her or not, it doesn't matter. It was real for her and to express the fact that she had suicidal thoughts and was prevented from getting help from that, you know, it is extraordinary to hear that. And –"*

PM: *"That's the bit I find hard to believe. I find it hard to believe that a senior member of the Royal Family, bearing in mind they've been very welcoming to Meghan and Meghan herself is on record as saying that. They were very welcoming collectively. I don't know, what's in it for the Palace to say to her 'You can't go and get help?'"*

HJ: *"I think, I think they tried to help each other, and in doing so they walled everybody else off. You know, we hear how tenderly he looked after. He held her hand tightly".*

SR: *"He cradled her".*

HJ: *"He cradled her. They, they probably cried in each other's arms. They probably felt very marginalised, very isolated, and going to a third party probably didn't seem, you know, within possibility. It didn't seem realistic for them. So, because, because they were together, it amplified them, it amplified the problem and it was a barrier against everybody else. So, the family became even more remote. The family became even more distanced and it, and it, and it reinforces emotions. It makes it worse".*

SR: *"Look, the message –"*

HJ: *"And actually what was needed was conciliation".*

SR: *"Yeah, but, well, what was needed, Dr –"*

HJ: *"And I think Oprah was a really good interviewer because she listened, she gave them the opportunity to talk without being judgmental".*

SR: *"OK, Dr Hilary, the key, the absolutely key thing, as you as a medic would agree, is that if someone is expressing those thoughts, you*

instantly access help and do not give reasons for not being able to get them help”.

HJ: *“Absolutely, absolutely, you take it seriously. You never assume, you never assume it’s a cry for help or dramatization”.*

SR: *“No. No, no, no, but, absolutely, but I’m talking about within, whoever this person was who said, you know. Because there were two reasons given, that it wouldn’t be a good look and also that she wasn’t paid employee, that they couldn’t help her. I mean, it, that doesn’t matter, does it? Anybody who expresses those thoughts must be given access to help immediately”.*

HJ: *“Absolutely. Yeah. And you can, you can only reconcile these problems through conciliation, through communication, and clearly there was an inability to communicate with the very people with whom they wanted to build bridges and make bonds”.*

AB: *“I think that’s exactly right, you know. As Harry revealed yesterday, he wasn’t allowed access to his grandmother. You know, you and I could knock on our family’s door and have that conversation. But if you can’t even access your grandmother to have that conversation, it’s believable that she didn’t have access to other members of staff that could help her”.*

PM: *“I mean, we haven’t heard from his grandmother. I mean, this is part of the problem here”.*

HJ: *“We’ve heard one side of the story”.*

PM: *“And we, and they know that the grandmother isn’t going to speak out about this, right? So”.*

AB: *“This is also an opportunity, Piers, for the Royal Family to make a stand on this and actually, you know, deal with it front on –”*

SR: *“Yes”.*

AB: *“– so that we can actually, eventually, put it behind us, and, and, and move on”.*

PM: *“Do you not think, I mean, look, on another wider point, do you not think the Queen has got more important things to worry about, like her husband lying seriously ill in hospital?”*

AB: *“I think this is a very unfortunate time for them as a family. You know, in an ideal world, this interview would go out in three weeks’ time. That wasn’t the case, and sometimes, you know, we can’t choose the timing of things”.*

SR: *"And also families deal with all sorts of different important issues simultaneously".*

AB: *"Yeah".*

SR: *"And of course, Prince Philip's health is, is huge importance. But when she, Meghan, has expressed the fact that she was not given help when she had those desperate, darkest thoughts is obviously something for the Royal Family to think about".*

HJ: *"Yeah, but hurt and resentment can be rebuilt, you know. There's always an opportunity to get people together, express their feelings, and actually they need to do it privately now. They need to do it much more privately in order to get that reconciliation".*

PM: *"I mean, you've got a situation where you've got two families being completely torched –"*

HJ: *"Yeah".*

PM: *"– and I cannot believe that Meghan and Harry are going to be happy having zero contact with any of their families other than, in Meghan's case, her mum. Harry may or may not talk to the Queen occasionally. I mean, you know, he seems to have lost touch with his dad, his brother".*

HJ: *"One really good thing that will come out of this is that ordinary families around the world will say, 'Do you know, these things happen to us'".*

PM: *"Yeah".*

SR: *"Yeah".*

HJ: *"They happen to them. They're human beings, you know, they might be Princes, Princesses, Kings and Queens. But they're human beings, they have feelings, they have hearts. And, and actually every other family in the world will say 'You know what, it makes our problems put into perspective a little bit, you know, because we all have these issues in place, we all have baggage, we all have anger and resentment'".*

SR: *"Tension, feelings".*

PM: *"Well, we're all one big, we're all one big happy family around this desk".*

AB: *"One big happy family".*

SR: *"Oh, we are".*

PM: *"Group hug, Alex?"*

AB: *"Alright, mate?"*

HJ: *"Well, we've had reconciliation here today and it's only taken half an hour".*

PM: *"Thank God we don't air our dirty laundry on air".*

AB: *"No".*

PM: *"Thank God we keep things behind closed doors. Alright".*

SR: *"It's 18 minutes past seven. Alex, Dr Hilary, thank you so much".*

PM: *"It's been a long first hour and there's going to be even more to come".*

SR: *"Let's get the news, travel and weather and whatever rifts there are where you are".*

PM: *"Time is a healer and we've got about four minutes".*